STARBLAZER

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No. 139

22p

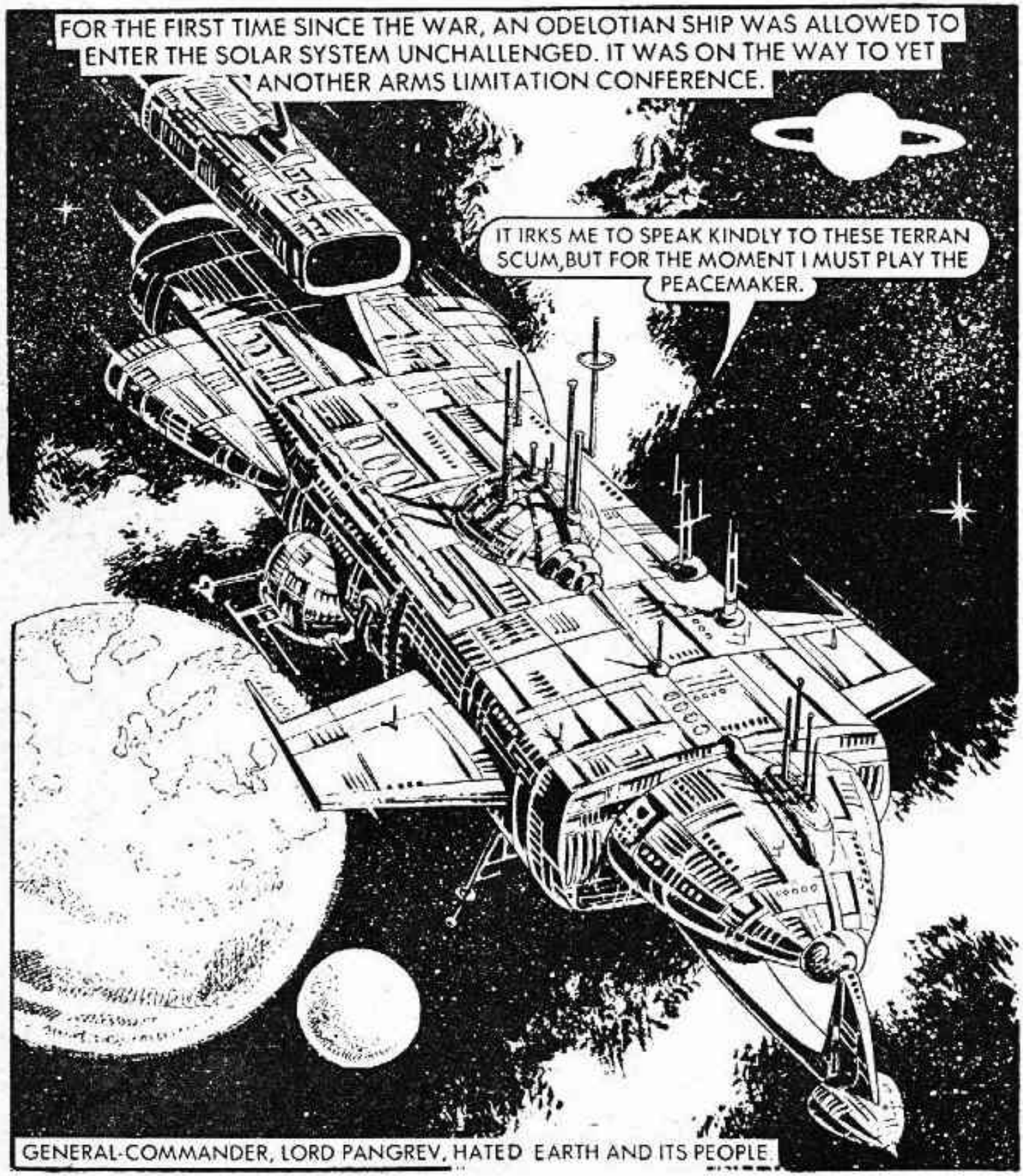
DRAMA IN SPACE AS EARTHMAN FIGHTS ALIEN IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MIGHTY—

ASTRAL ARMADA

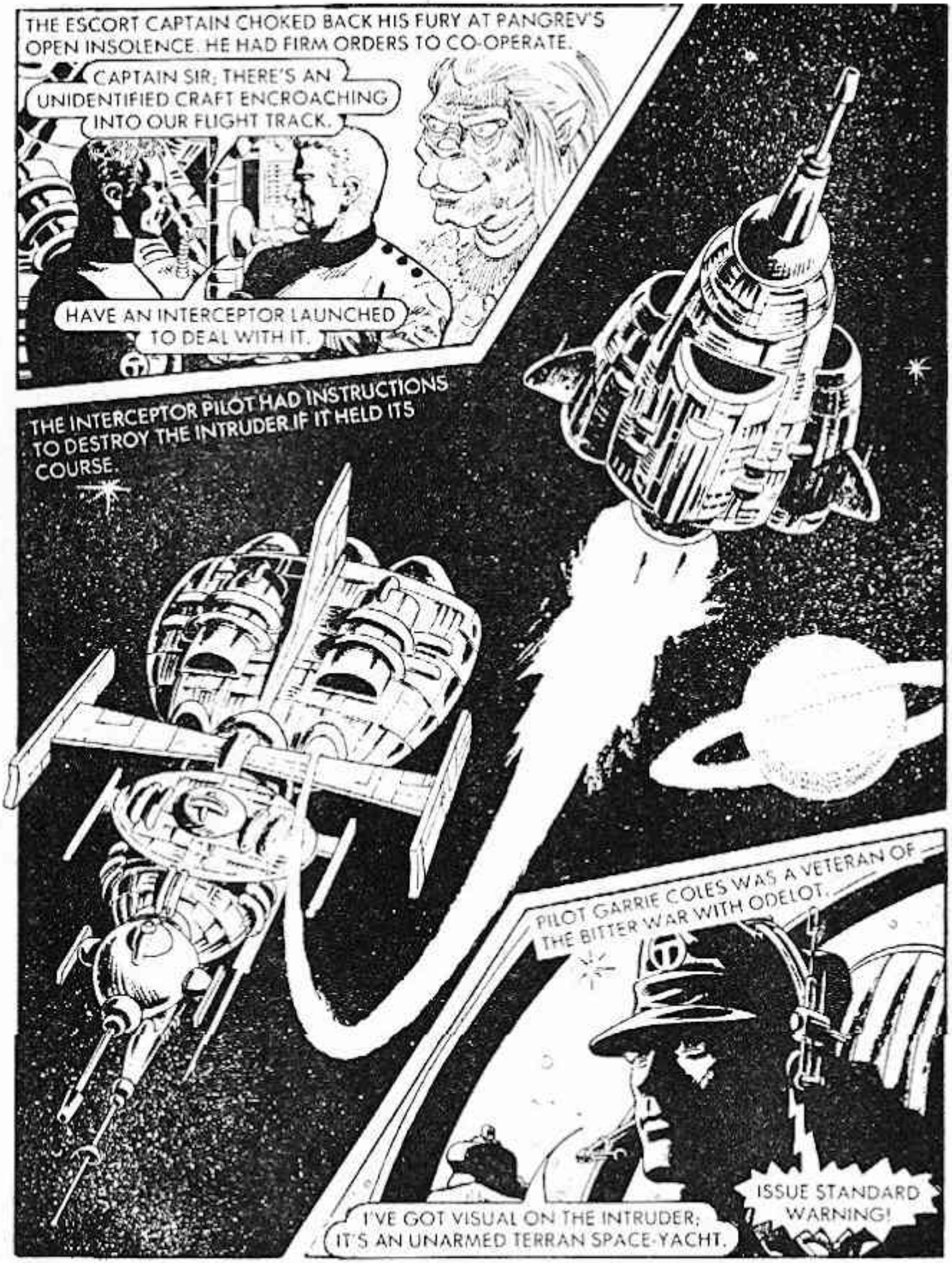
STARBLAZER

THE AGGRESSIVE ALIEN RACE OF ODELOT DEMANDED THE PAYMENT OF CREDS FROM CRAFT PASSING THROUGH ITS SECTOR OF SPACE. EARTH, ALONG WITH OTHER WORLDS IN THE GALACTIC REPUBLIC, DECLINED TO PAY. INCENSED, ODELOT TOOK PAYMENT BY ATTACKING AND LOOTING ANY REPUBLICAN VESSELS IT COULD LAY ITS HANDS ON. THE REPUBLIC RETALIATED AND THE 4TH THERMAL WAR BEGAN. FOR YEARS BOTH SIDES FOUGHT A WAR NEITHER WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO WIN, AND NEITHER WAS WILLING TO LOSE. EXHAUSTED, OVER-STRETCHED AND ALL BUT BANKRUPT, BOTH SIDES SUED FOR PEACE. THE TREATY OF VERZ ALLES WAS SIGNED AND PEACE REIGNED — AN UNEASY PEACE, ONE WHERE BITTER MEMORIES FREQUENTLY CAME TO THE SURFACE.

ASTRAL ARMADA



THE TERRAN DEFENCE FORCES WERE TAKING NO CHANCES — THEY INTENDED TO ESCORT THE REPRESENTATIVE FROM ODELOT ALL THE WAY TO THE CONFERENCE.
ODELOT CRAFT—YOU WILL LINK YOUR NAVIGATION COMPUTER TO MINE WHILST IN EARTHSPACE.
MY DEAR EARTHLING, I, PANGREV OF ODELOT, WILL RETAIN INDEPENDENT CONTROL OF MY SHIP AT ALL TIMES.
SO BE IT! ANY DEVIATION FROM THE FLIGHT TRACK WILL RESULT IN YOUR DESTRUCTION, LORD PANGREV.


THE ESCORT CAPTAIN CHOKED BACK HIS FURY AT PANGREV'S OPEN INSOLENCE. HE HAD FIRM ORDERS TO CO-OPERATE.
CAPTAIN SIR; THERE'S AN UNIDENTIFIED CRAFT ENCROACHING INTO OUR FLIGHT TRACK.
HAVE AN INTERCEPTOR LAUNCHED TO DEAL WITH IT.
THE INTERCEPTOR PILOT HAD INSTRUCTIONS TO DESTROY THE INTRUDER IF IT HELD ITS COURSE.
PILOT GARRIE COLES WAS A VETERAN OF THE BITTER WAR WITH ODELOT.
I'VE GOT VISUAL ON THE INTRUDER; IT'S AN UNARMED TERRAN SPACE-YACHT.
ISSUE STANDARD WARNING!

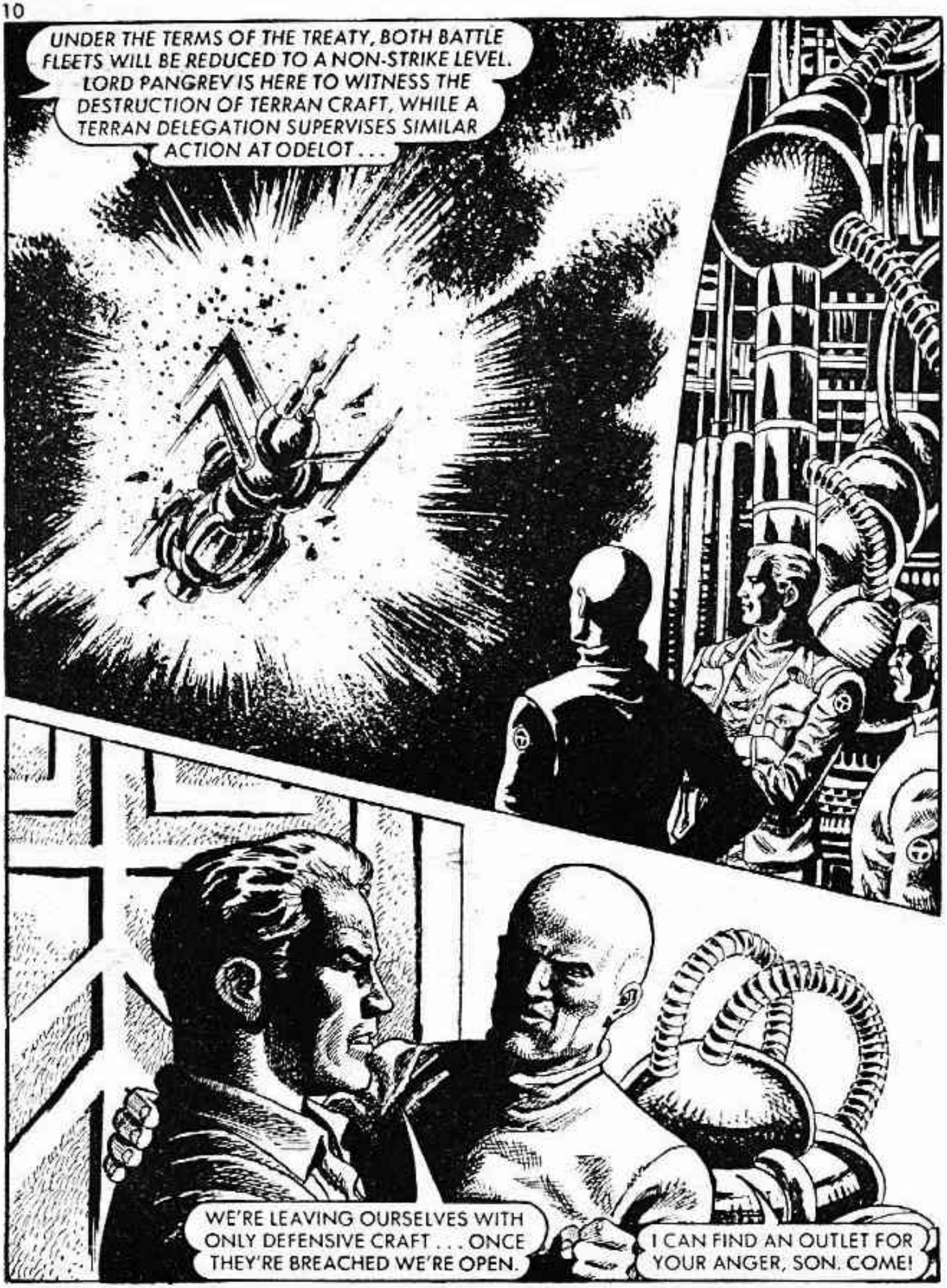
THIS IS A RESTRICTED AREA — ANY ATTEMPT TO HOLD YOUR PRESENT COURSE WILL RESULT IN YOUR DESTRUCTION.

THE VOICE OF THE SPACE YACHT'S OWNER EXPLODED IN GARRIE'S HEADPHONES.
I PROTEST AT THE ODELOT FILTH BEING ALLOWED INTO EARTHSPACE! THEY ARE MURDERING SWINE. I SHALL NOT MOVE UNTIL THEY ARE SENT PACKING!

USING A TRACTOR BEAM, GARRIE FORCIBLY TOWED THE PROTESTER OUT OF THE RESTRICTED AREA.
THE INTRUDER WAS EJECTED HARMLESSLY INTO SPACE.
THE PROTESTER WAS ONLY SAYING WHAT WE ALL FEEL ABOUT THE ODELOTIANS.
I'M NOT HERE TO ARGUE, I'M HERE TO ACT!

SOME TIME LATER, GARRIE WAS ABLE TO RENDEZVOUS WITH HIS BATTLE-CRUISER.
PILOT OFFICER COLES REPORT TO THE CAPTAIN AT ONCE.
IT SOUNDS LIKE TROUBLE.
GARRIE REPORTED TO THE CAPTAIN —
THERE HAS BEEN AN OFFICIAL PROTEST FROM ODELOT ABOUT THAT INCIDENT. IF YOU'D ACTED AS TOLD, THEY WOULDN'T HAVE KNOWN ABOUT IT.
I WASN'T TRAINED TO MURDER CIVILIANS, SIR.
I KNOW, BUT MY ORDERS ARE TO DISCIPLINE THE PILOT CONCERNED — YOU'RE SUSPENDED, PENDING AN INQUIRY!

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS SERVICE CAREER, GARRIE WAS IDLE, AND HE HATED IT —
SUSPENDED FOR NOT KILLING A FELLOW EARTHER WHO WAS ONLY SAYING WHAT WE ALL FEEL. WHAT'S THIS WORLD COMING TO?
THERE'S NEWS ABOUT THE PEACE TREATY TERMS ON THE VID-REEL.
SNEERING CUR! I'D WIPE THAT SMILE OFF HIS FACE IF I COULD.


UNDER THE TERMS OF THE TREATY, BOTH BATTLE FLEETS WILL BE REDUCED TO A NON-STRIKE LEVEL. LORD PANGREV IS HERE TO WITNESS THE DESTRUCTION OF TERRAN CRAFT, WHILE A TERRAN DELEGATION SUPERVISES SIMILAR ACTION AT ODELOT . . .
WE'RE LEAVING OURSELVES WITH ONLY DEFENSIVE CRAFT . . . ONCE THEY'RE BREACHED WE'RE OPEN.
I CAN FIND AN OUTLET FOR YOUR ANGER, SON. COME!

GARRIE WAS TAKEN TO SPACEPORT LEUCHARS, A FRONTLINE STRIKE STATION.
I AM SHARGAL, PILOT, RETIRED. FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER I HAVE ORDERS TO ASSEMBLE A SQUAD FOR A MISSION AGAINST PANGREV. YOUR NAMES WERE ON MY LIST. I TAKE YOU ALL WANT TO STRIKE BACK.
AYE! AYE! SIR!

THE MISSION WAS ORGANISED BY THE SECURITY ARM OF THE TERRAN DEFENCE FORCE, BUT IF ANYTHING WENT WRONG, THE MEN WHO TOOK PART WOULD BE DISOWNED AND TREATED AS CRIMINALS UNDER TERRAN LAW.
OUR TASK IS TO MONITOR PAGREV'S CRAFT. SOME OF THE HIGH COMMAND DON'T TRUST HIM!
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ON BOARD AN UNMARKED CRAFT —
I'LL SLIP IN AS CLOSE TO PANGREV'S ORBITAL MOORING AS I DARE WITHOUT RISKING DETECTION. YOU SPACE-WALK THE REST OF THE WAY.
24
FORCE BEAMS PUSHED GARRIE AND HIS CREWMATE RAPIDLY ACROSS THE VOID SEPARATING THE TWO CRAFT —
THE SUITS ARE SPECIALLY SCREENED AGAINST SCANNER DETECTION. WE'LL BE IN AND OUT WITHOUT THEM EVER KNOWING.
THIS POWER-PACK WILL SNOOP ON ALL THE ELECTRONIC ACTIVITY IN THE MAIN CONTROL SYSTEMS.

SUDDENLY, A SIZZLING BURST OF ENERGY ERUPTED BESIDE THEM —
JUPE, WE'RE UNDER FIRE!
A ROUTINE ODELOT PATROL HAD CHANCED UPON THE TWO EARTHMEN.

IN THE STRUGGLE, GARRIE'S AIR LINE WAS CUT — !
HE'S DEAD, BUT SO WILL I BE SOON NOW THAT MY LINE IS CUT — UNLESS . . .
GARRIE USED THE DEAD BULK OF THE ODELOT PATROLMAN —
EVERY ACTION HAS AN EQUAL AND OPPOSITE REACTION, SO ONE BIG PUSH SHOULD DO IT.

AS THE DEAD ODELOT PATROLMAN SPUN AWAY INTO SPACE, GARRIE FLOATED TOWARDS HIS CREWMATE AND SAFETY.

I'VE GOT A GRIP, NOW SHARGAL CAN REEL US IN FAST BEFORE THE ODELOTIANS SEND OUT REINFORCEMENTS.

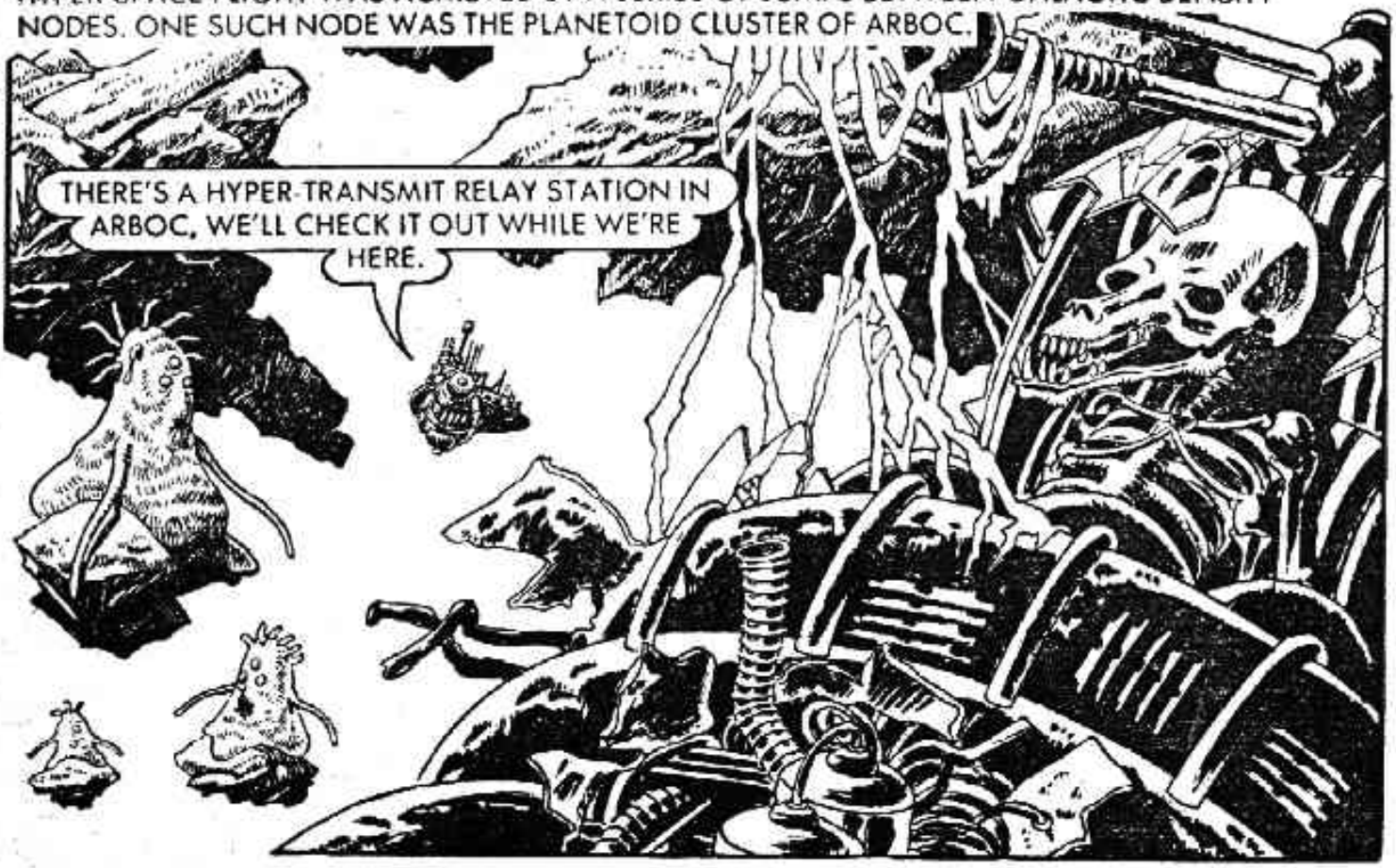
BACK ON BASE SHIP

YOUR SPY-PROBE-RELAY HAS DETECTED THAT PANGREV IS MAKING A COMPREHENSIVE SCAN OF ALL EARTH'S DEFENCE SYSTEMS. NOW WE CAN BE CERTAIN HE'S UP TO SOMETHING.

THE SPY-PROBE-RELAY WAS PROGRAMMED TO DISINTEGRATE UPON DISCOVERY, SO THAT NO TRACE OF ITS ORIGIN WOULD BE DISCLOSED.

AS THE BASE SHIP PREPARED TO HYPER JUMP, PANGREV WATCHED WITH ULTRA-HIGH-SENSITIVE SCANNERS.
STAGE TWO OF OUR MISSION IS TO CHECK OUT THAT THE ODELOTIAN ARE ALSO DESTROYING THEIR SURPLUS CRAFT.
ON BOARD PAGREV'S SHIP —
SO THEY SPY ON ME, AND NOW KNOW MY SECRET! THE HYPER-SPACE ROUTE TO ODELOT PASSES THROUGH THE PLANETOID CLUSTER OF ARBOC. WE WILL INTERCEPT THEM THERE.

HYPER-SPACE FLIGHT WAS ACHIEVED BY A SERIES OF JUMPS BETWEEN GALACTIC DENSITY NODES. ONE SUCH NODE WAS THE PLANETOID CLUSTER OF ARBOC.



THE GALACTIC GAZETTEER SHOWS A POSSIBLE REFUGE DEAD AHEAD.
WE'VE GOT HIDDEN LASER-TURRETS, WE'LL GIVE HIM A FIGHT IF THAT'S WHAT HE WANTS.
IT WOULD BE SUICIDE. PANGREV OUT-GUNS US IN EVERY DEPARTMENT. WE'VE GOT TO RUN.
THE WRECKAGE WILL CONFUSE PANGREV'S TRACKING SCANNERS.
THE LAST MAJOR FLEET ACTION OF THE TERRAN-ODELOT WAR HAD BEEN FOUGHT AT ARBOC. THOSE SHIPS WHICH HAD BEEN TOO DAMAGED TO ACHIEVE HYPER-SPACE FLIGHT, HAD BEEN LEFT TO THE VAGARIES OF GRAVITY. THEY DRIFTED IN THE ETHER WINDS.

PANGREV DID NOT FOLLOW THE BASE SHIP INTO THE OLD BATTLE SITE —
I SHALL NOT FOLLOW YOU INTO AN OBVIOUS TRAP. I WILL BE WAITING FOR YOU WHEN YOU EMERGE FROM YOUR SANCTUARY!
MEANWHILE, AMONG THE TWISTED HULKS —
WE'RE SAFE, BUT FOR HOW LONG?

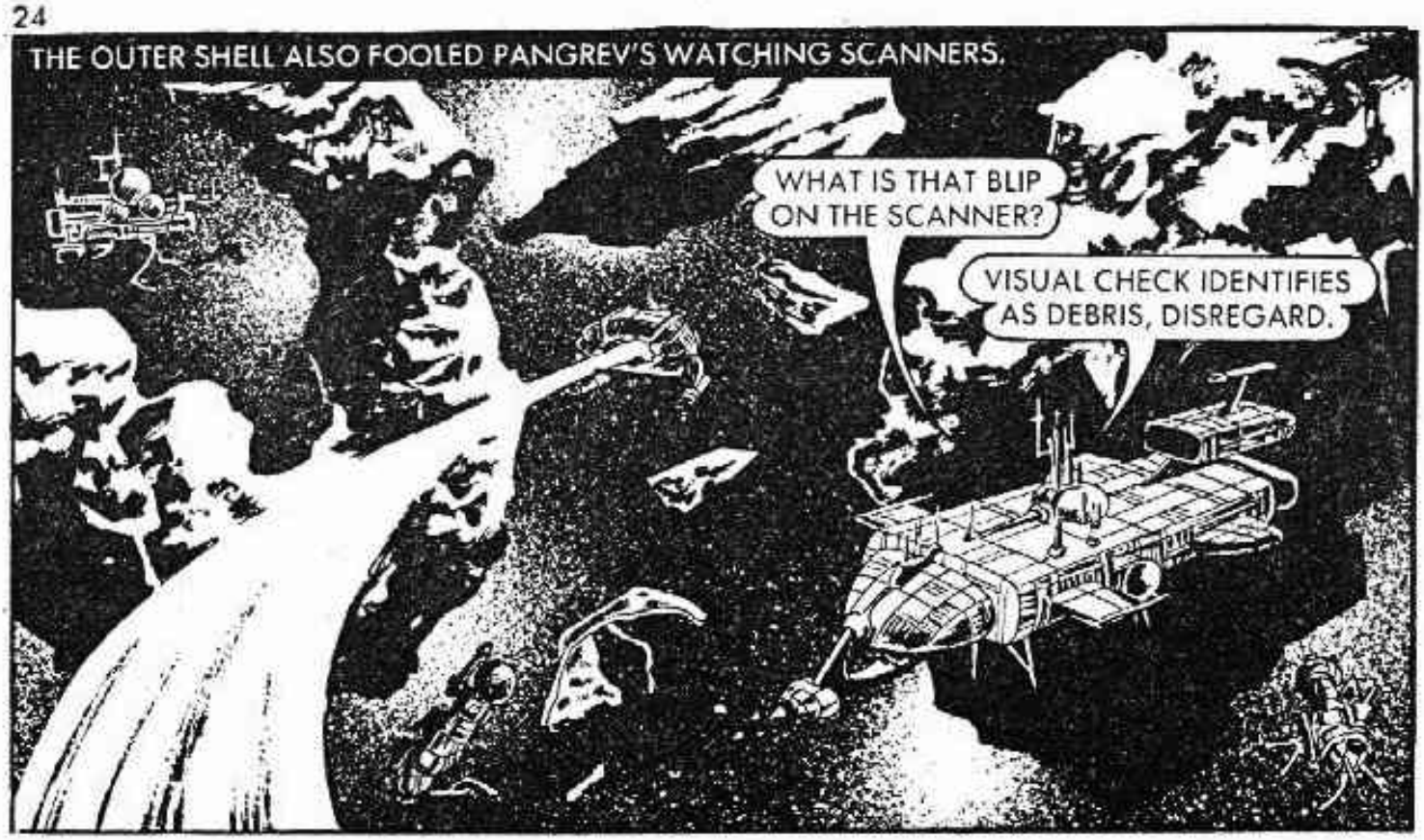
UNLUCKILY FOR THE MEN OF EARTH, SOME OF THE WRECKS STILL HAD OPERATIONAL AUTOMATIC DEFENCE SYSTEMS.

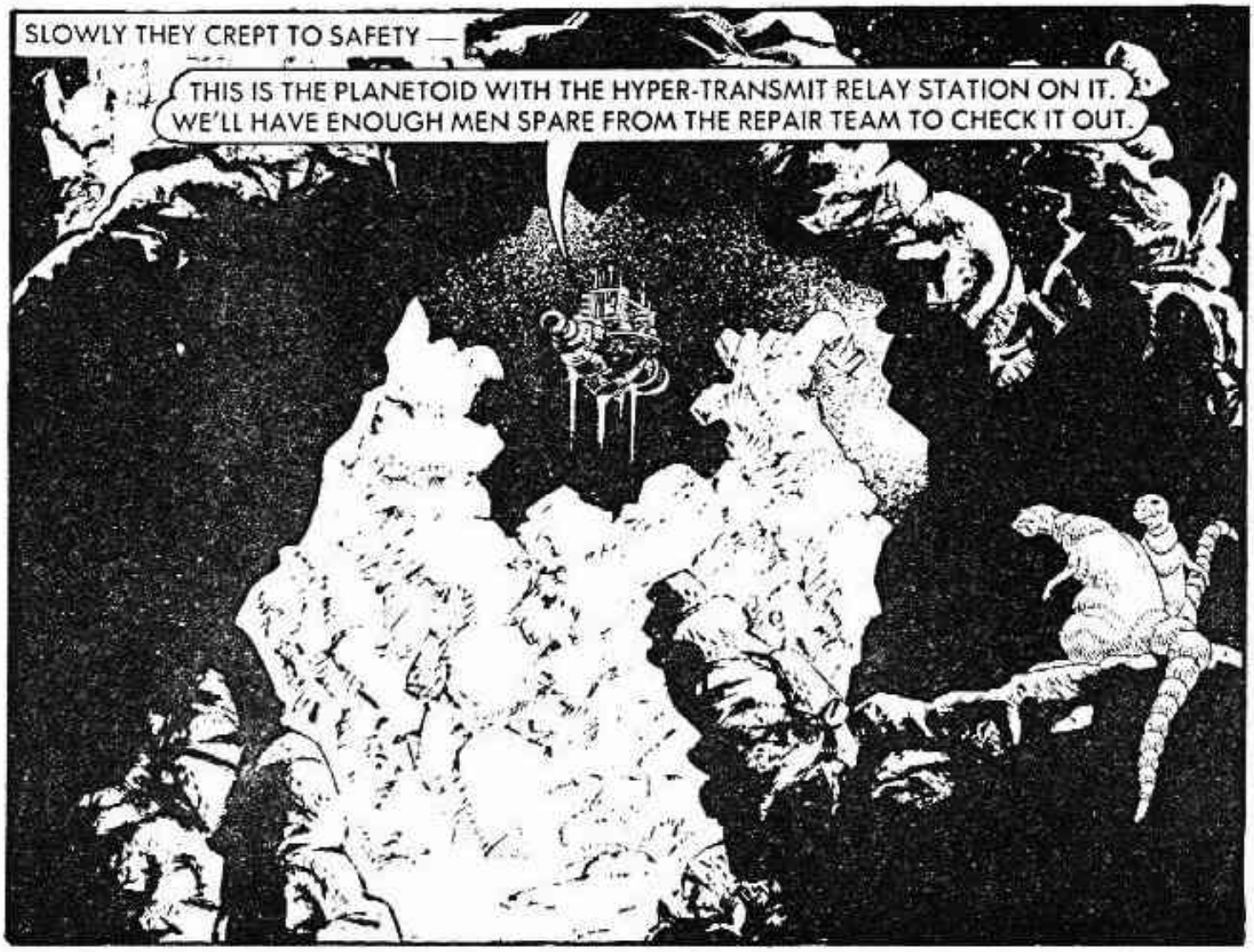
BUT LUCKILY FOR THEM THE POWER SUPPLY TO THE AUTOMATIC WEAPONS OF THE WRECK WAS NOT FULLY EFFECTIVE.
TAKE OVER FROM THE AUTO-PILOT, GARRIE.

POWER LOSS ON DIRECTIONAL JETS, WHICH MEANS I'M PILOTING MORE BY LUCK THAN GOOD JUDGEMENT!
WE'RE BOXED IN! OUR ONLY HOPE IS TO TAKE REFUGE INSIDE ONE OF THE WRECKS.

WE'LL NEED AN ATMOSPHERE TO TACKLE THOSE REPAIRS AND I THINK I KNOW HOW WE CAN RUN THE GAUNTLET OF THOSE AUTO-WEAPONS, TO REACH A PLANETOID.

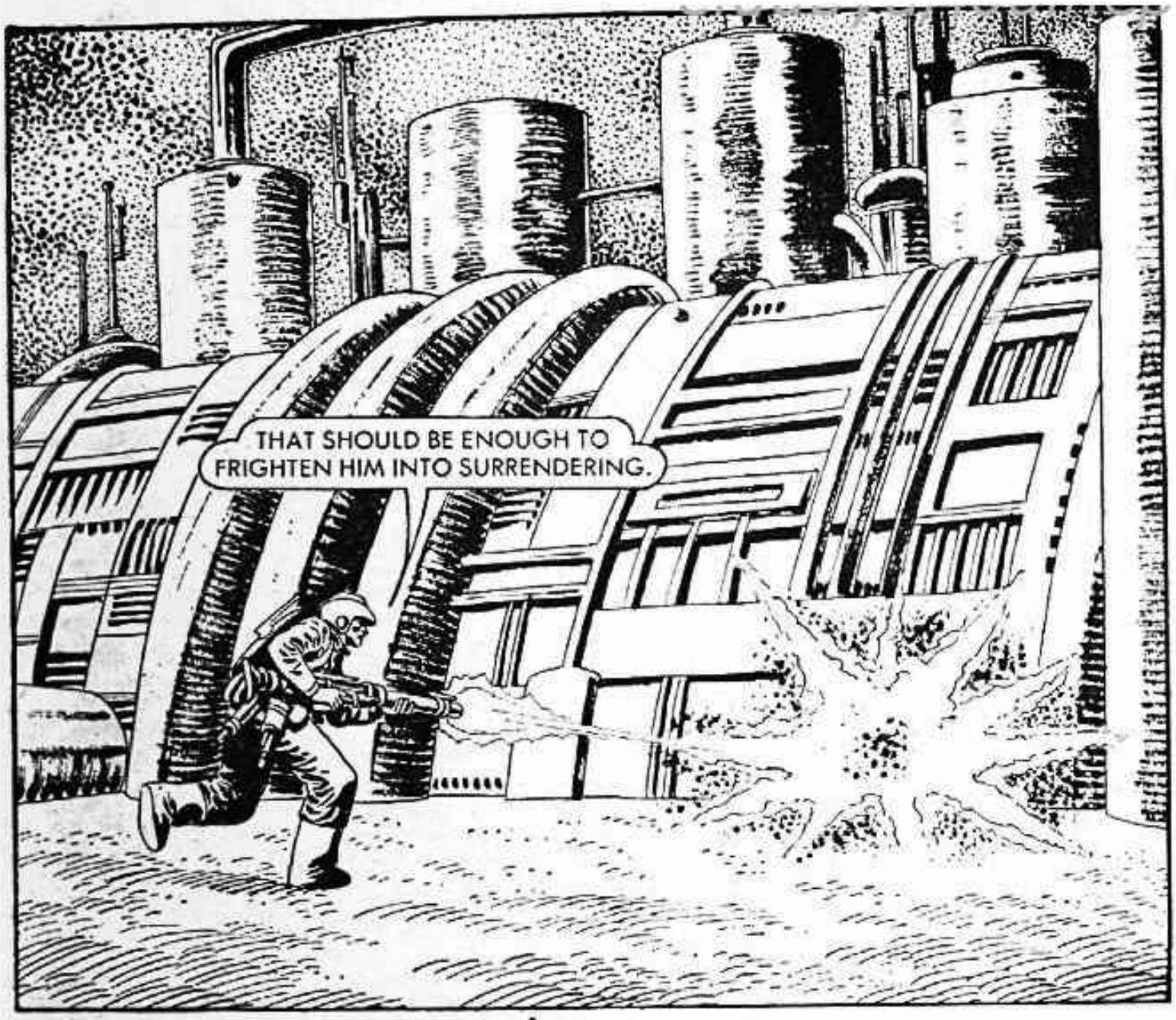
GARRIE ORGANISED A WORK PARTY TO CUT FREE A CYLINDRICAL SECTION OF THE WRECK'S ARMOURED HULL.
WE'LL USE THE OLD HULK AS A PROTECTIVE OUTER SHELL.
THE WHOLE MAKESHIFT CRAFT STUTTERED INTO ACTION
WE'RE TAKING A TERRIFIC POUNDING BUT I THINK THE OLD HULK IS EQUAL TO IT.


THE OUTER SHELL ALSO FOOLED PANGREV'S WATCHING SCANNERS.
WHAT IS THAT BLIP ON THE SCANNER?
VISUAL CHECK IDENTIFIES AS DEBRIS, DISREGARD.


SLOWLY THEY CREPT TO SAFETY —
THIS IS THE PLANETOID WITH THE HYPER-TRANSMIT RELAY STATION ON IT. WE'LL HAVE ENOUGH MEN SPARE FROM THE REPAIR TEAM TO CHECK IT OUT.

ONCE DOWN ON THE PLANETOID, OBSERVERS WATCHED CAREFULLY —
I CAN SEE AN ODELOT SHUTTLE CRAFT AT THE TRANSMIT RELAY STATION. WE'LL DIG IN HERE UNTIL WE KNOW THEIR STRENGTH.
WE'LL SEND A SPY-SHELL IN TO TAKE A LOOK.
THE SPY-SHELL WAS ABLE TO ELECTRONICALLY PROBE ENEMY POSITIONS AND FEED DATA BACK TO GROUND FORCES —

THE SPY-SHELL DEPENDED ON SURPRISE FOR ITS EFFECTIVENESS AND USUALLY HAD A LIMITED LIFE.
THE TERRANS ARE HERE, I MUST WARN PANGREV.
TRANSMISSION CEASED! THEY KNOW WE'RE HERE, BUT WE KNOW THERE'S ONLY ONE OF THEM. LET'S GO.


THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO FRIGHTEN HIM INTO SURRENDERING.

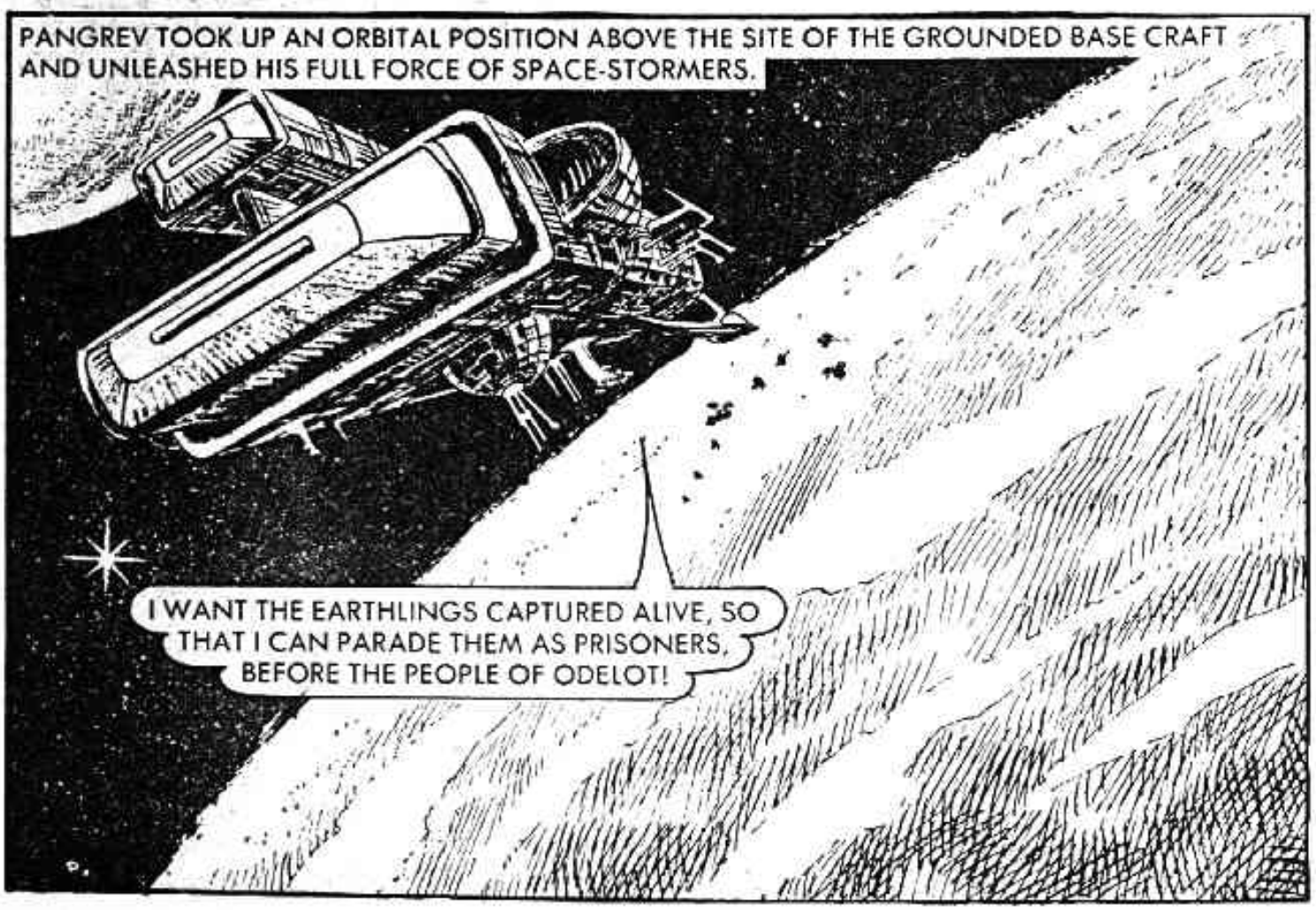
THE ODELOT SIGNALER OFFERED NO RESISTANCE —
IT'S AS WE FEARED. THEY'VE BEEN TAMPERING WITH THE TRANSMISSIONS FROM OUR DIPLOMATIC MISSION ON ODELOT.

WHAT NASTINESS HAVE YOU ODELOTIAN ABOMINATIONS BEEN PLOTTING?
ASK THE LORD PANGREV, EARTHLING. HE WILL BE HERE SHORTLY!

GARRIE COLES CALLING BASE CRAFT: PANGREV'S FOUND OUT WHERE WE ARE. TAKE OFF AND TRY TO LOSE YOURSELF IN SPACE. WE'LL TAKE OUR CHANCES HERE.

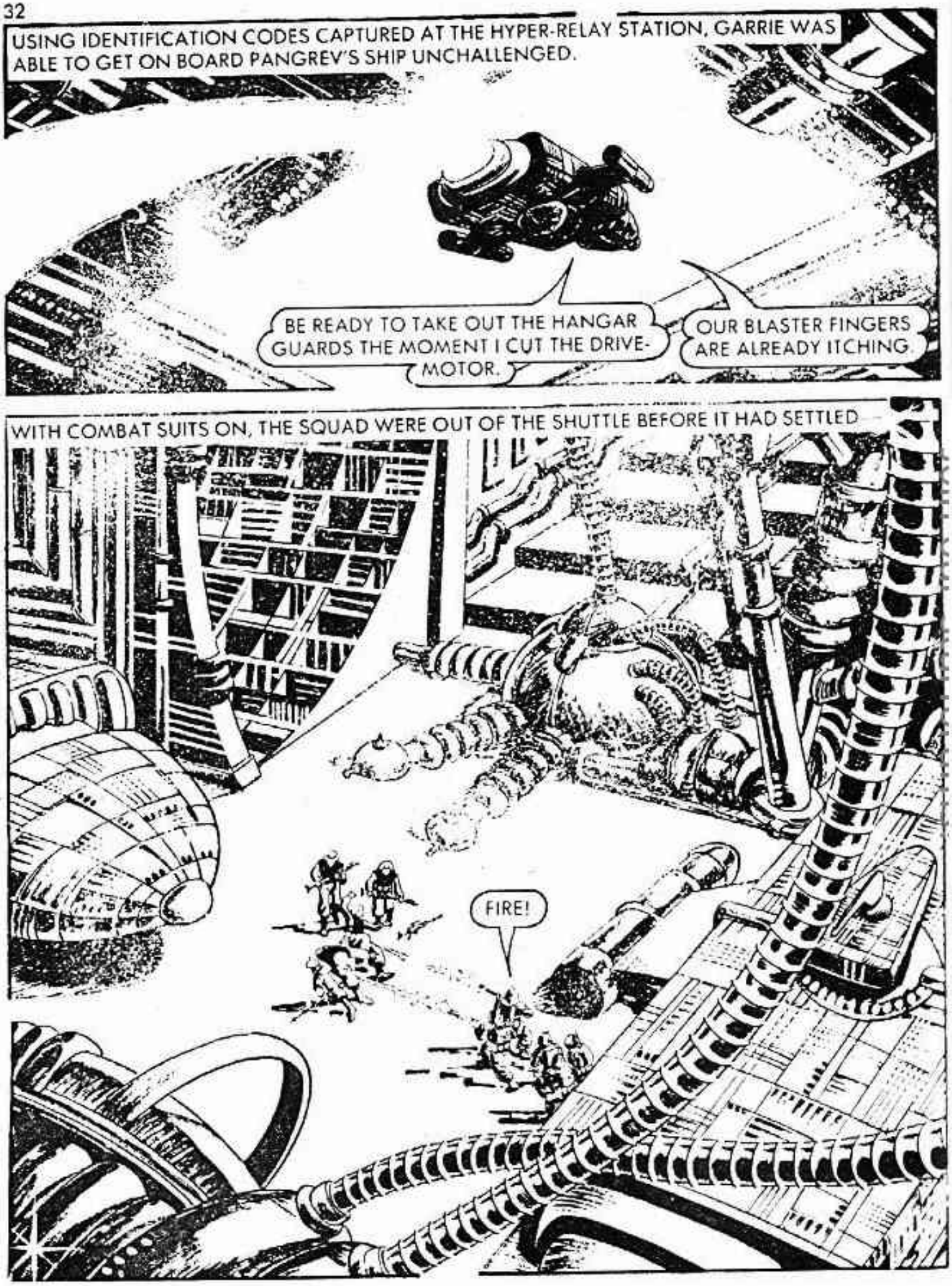
BUT —
THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN TAKE OFF! HALF THE SYSTEMS ARE DISMANTLED FOR REPAIR.

GARRIE TOOK THE ONLY COURSE POSSIBLE —
THE ODELOTIAN SHUTTLE-CRAFT GIVES US AN OUTSIDE CHANCE — IF MY PLAN WORKS.


PANGREV TOOK UP AN ORBITAL POSITION ABOVE THE SITE OF THE GROUNDED BASE CRAFT AND UNLEASHED HIS FULL FORCE OF SPACE-STORMERS.
I WANT THE EARTHLINGS CAPTURED ALIVE, SO THAT I CAN PARADE THEM AS PRISONERS, BEFORE THE PEOPLE OF ODELOT!

ODELOTIAN GROUND TROOPS POURED ONTO THE PLANET —
TAKE UP THE RING OF FIRE FORMATION ROUND THE TERRAN, AT THE DOUBLE NOW!
HAVE THE EARTHLINGS BEEN CALLED UPON TO SURRENDER?
WE'VE BEEN UNABLE TO MAKE ANY CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY, MY LORD.

THE REASON WHY THE CALLS TO SURRENDER WENT UNANSWERED, WAS BECAUSE THE CREW HAD EVACUATED THE BASE CRAFT, LEAVING THE DEFENCE SYSTEMS ON AUTOMATIC COMPUTER CONTROL.
ATTENTION EARTHLING SCUM, DO YOU SURRENDER?
AS THE GROUNDED BASE CRAFT'S COMPUTER BATTLED AGAINST THE MIGHT OF PANGREV'S SPACE-STORMERS, HER COMMANDER AND CREW WERE CROWDED INTO A COMMANDEERED ODELOTIAN SHUTTLE.
BY THE LOOK OF PANGREV'S GROUND FORCES, THERE CAN ONLY BE A SKELETON CREW LEFT ON HIS SHIP. DO WE TAKE THE CHANCE?
LEAD ON, GARRIE, IT'S THE ONLY OPTION WE'VE GOT LEFT.

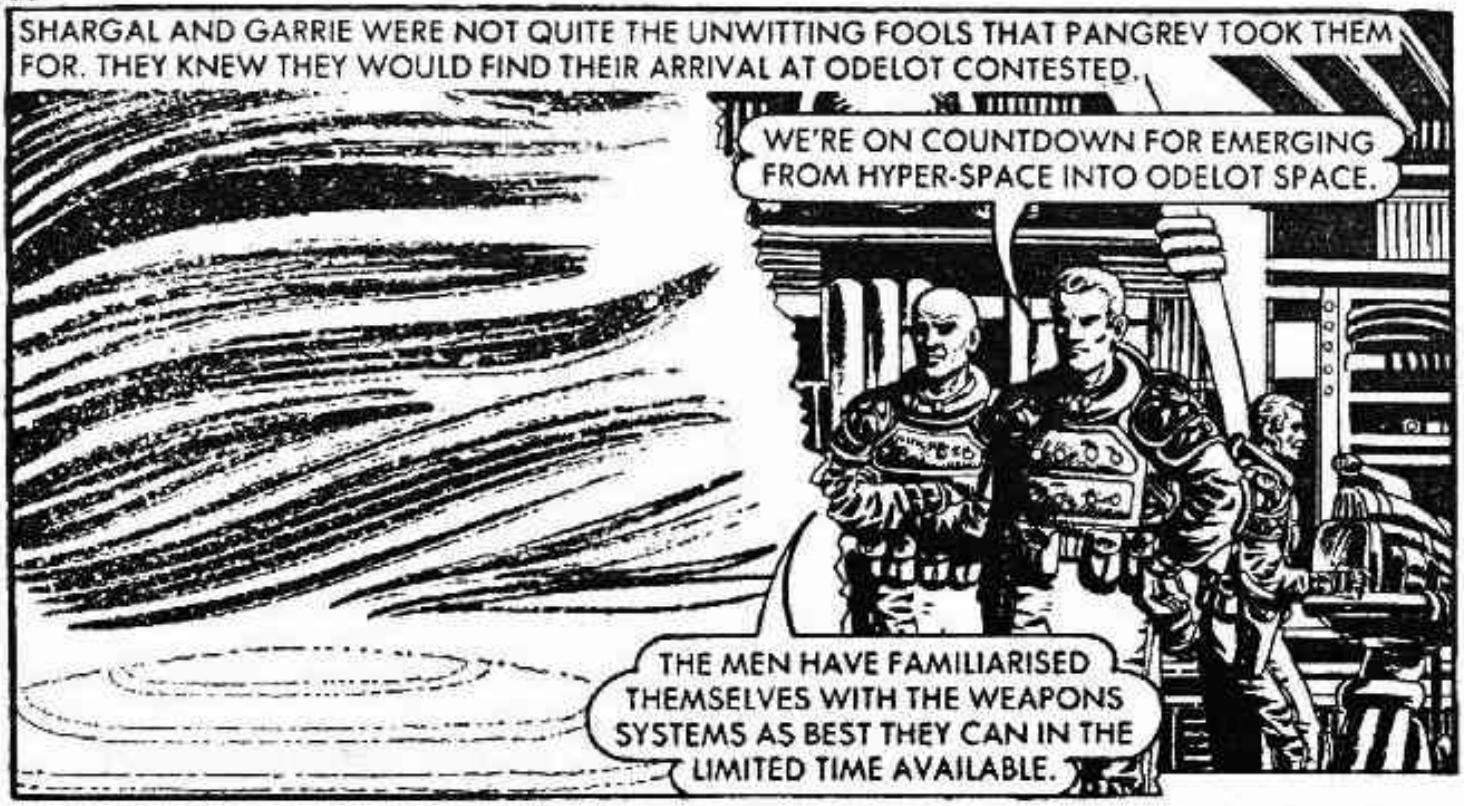

USING IDENTIFICATION CODES CAPTURED AT THE HYPER-RELAY STATION, GARRIE WAS ABLE TO GET ON BOARD PANGREV'S SHIP UNCHALLENGED.
BE READY TO TAKE OUT THE HANGAR GUARDS THE MOMENT I CUT THE DRIVE-MOTOR.
OUR BLASTER FINGERS ARE ALREADY ITCHING.
WITH COMBAT SUITS ON, THE SQUAD WERE OUT OF THE SHUTTLE BEFORE IT HAD SETTLED
FIRE!

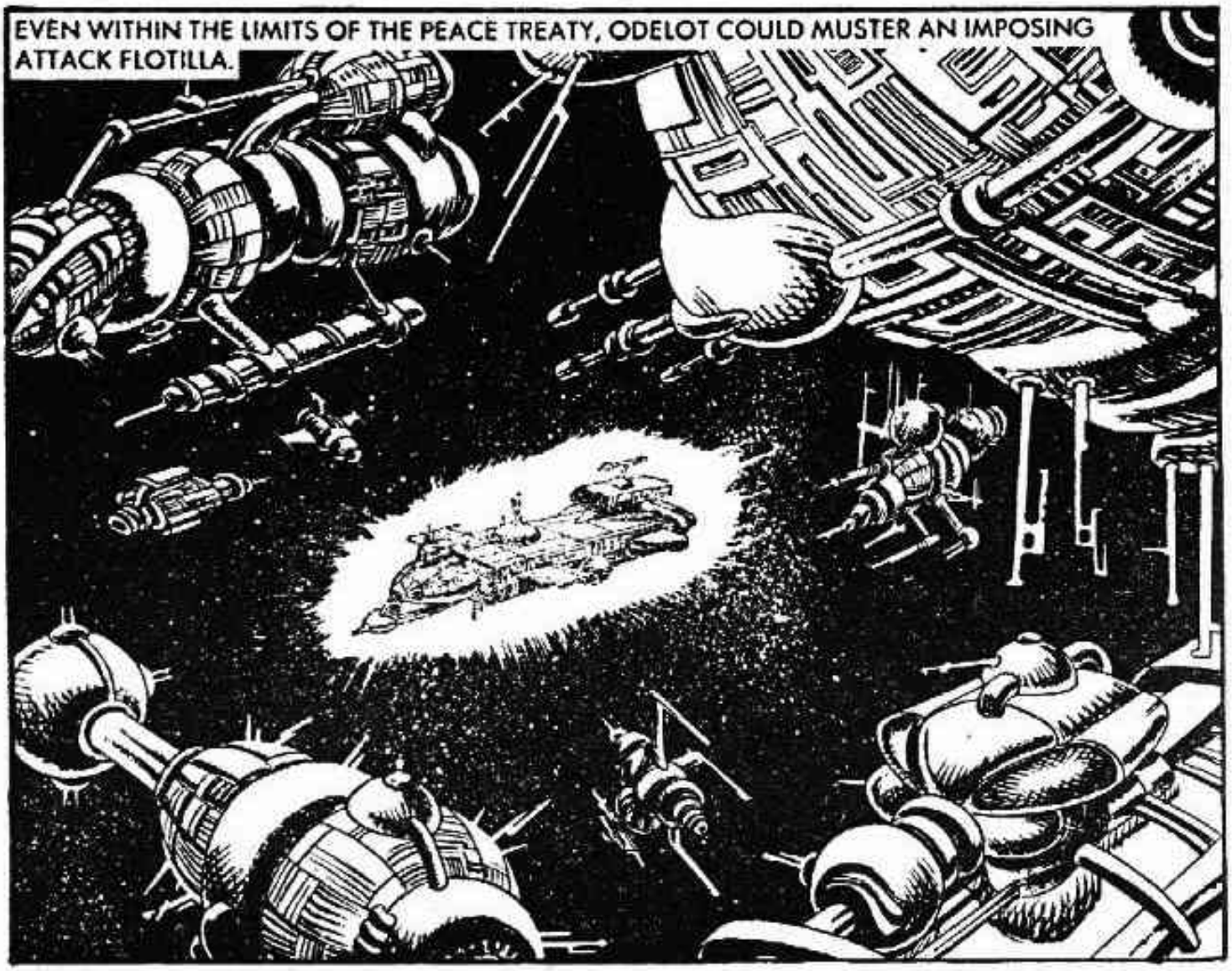
IN THE CONFUSION, THE ODELOTIANS SURRENDERED BEFORE THEY REALISED ONLY A HANDFUL OF EARTHMEN HAD ATTACKED THEM.
CAN YOU OPERATE ODELOTIAN EQUIPMENT, GARRIE?
NO PROBLEM. IT WAS BASIC TRAINING FOR OPERATIONAL PILOTS DURING THE WAR.
THERE'S A TRANSMISSION COMING THROUGH, DO WE TAKE IT?
SWITCH TO " RECEIVE ONLY ", UNTIL WE KNOW WHO IT IS.
ATTENTION, WE HAVE CAPTURED THE TERRAN SHIP BUT THE EARTHLINGS ARE MISSING. USE HIGH RESOLUTION ORBITAL SCAN TO SEARCH THE PLANETOID FOR ANY TRACE OF THEM . . .

GARRIE SWITCHED TO TRANSMIT —
EXCHANGE IS NO ROBBERY, PANGREV. YOU'VE GOT OUR SHIP AND WE'VE GOT YOURS.
NOM DE JUPE!

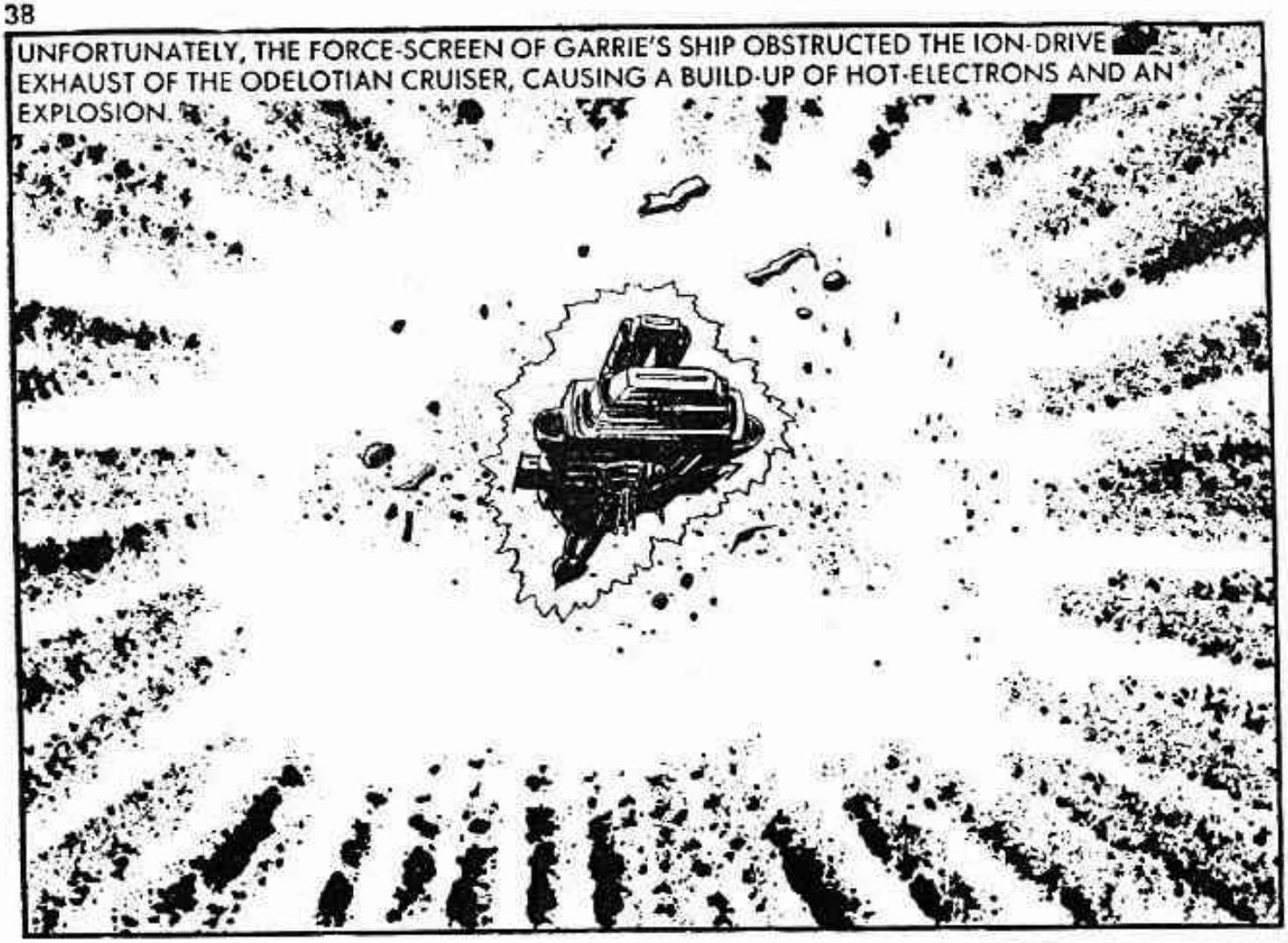
THE CAPTURED SHIP BLASTED OFF —
WE'LL LEAVE THE PRISONERS STRANDED ON ANOTHER PLANETOID AND THEN MAKE FOR ODELOT ITSELF, TO FIND OUT WHAT THEIR PLANS ARE.

THE EARTHLING FOOLS THINK I AM STRANDED, BUT THE HYPER-TRANSMIT RELAY STATION WILL ENABLE ME TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT.
I WILL ESTABLISH A TRANSMIT LINK WITH ODELOT FOR YOUR IMMEDIATE USE, MY LORD.
THOSE TERRAN SCUM WILL FIND A RECEPTION COMMITTEE TO GREET THEIR ARRIVAL AT ODELOT.


SHARGAL AND GARRIE WERE NOT QUITE THE UNWITTING FOOLS THAT PANGREV TOOK THEM FOR. THEY KNEW THEY WOULD FIND THEIR ARRIVAL AT ODELOT CONTESTED.
WE'RE ON COUNTDOWN FOR EMERGING FROM HYPER-SPACE INTO ODELOT SPACE.
THE MEN HAVE FAMILIARISED THEMSELVES WITH THE WEAPONS SYSTEMS AS BEST THEY CAN IN THE LIMITED TIME AVAILABLE.

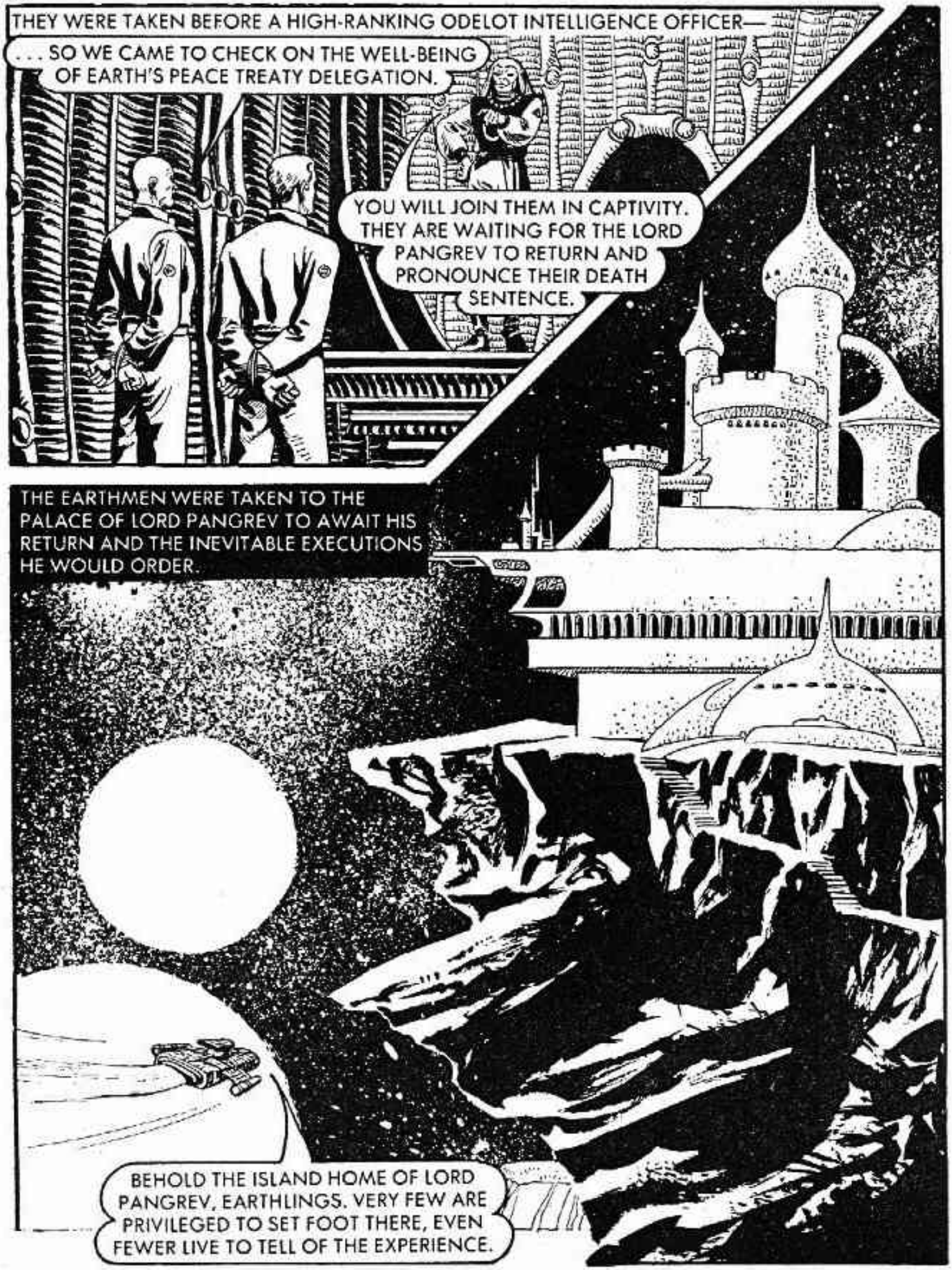

EVEN WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE PEACE TREATY, ODELOT COULD MUSTER AN IMPOSING ATTACK FLOTILLA.

I'M GOING TO TRY AND BREAK THROUGH A GAP IN THEIR BATTLE FORMATION BEFORE OUR DEFENSIVE SCREENS COLLAPSE.
IF I GET IN CLOSE TO ONE OF THEIR SHIPS IT WILL CONFUSE THEIR WEAPON GUIDANCE SYSTEMS.
GARRIE LOCKED-ON WITH TRACTOR BEAMS TO THE ION-DRIVE EXHAUST COWL OF ONE OF THE ODELOTIAN CRUISERS.
ITS TURRETS CAN'T RANGE ON THIS VECTOR AND THE REST OF THE FLOTILLA CAN'T DISTINGUISH BETWEEN US AS TARGETS.


UNFORTUNATELY, THE FORCE-SCREEN OF GARRIE'S SHIP OBSTRUCTED THE ION-DRIVE EXHAUST OF THE ODELOTIAN CRUISER, CAUSING A BUILD-UP OF HOT-ELECTRONS AND AN EXPLOSION.

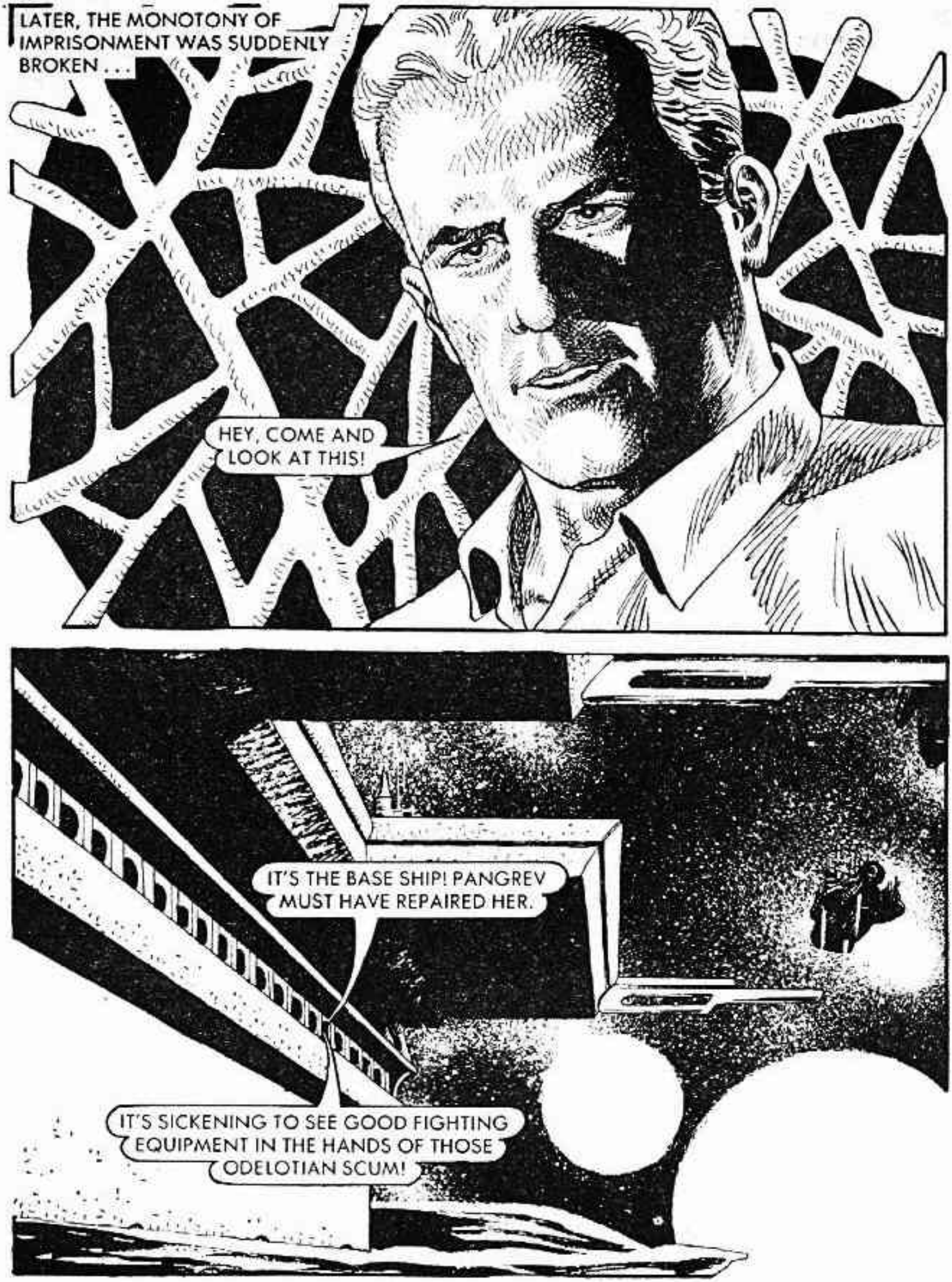
THE FORCE OF THE EXPLOSION WAS TRANSMITTED ALONG THE TRACTOR BEAM LINK AND SHOOK GARRIE'S SHIP WITH DEVASTATING RESULTS.
IO'S VOLCANOES!

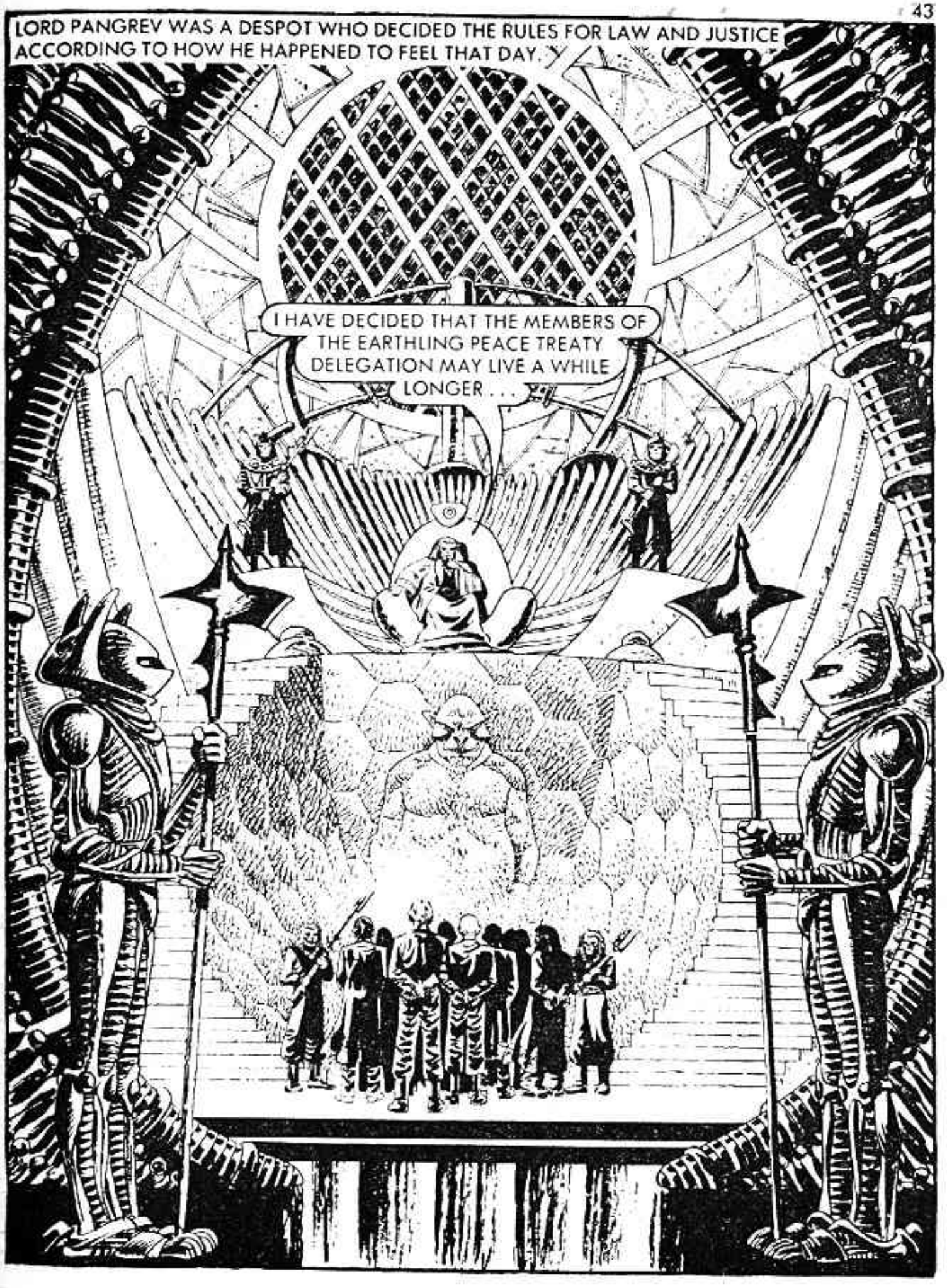
THE EARTHMEN ABANDONED SHIP AND WERE SWIFTLY SNATCHED FROM SPACE AS PRISONERS OF THE ODELOTIANS.
SUIT UP, GARRIE, WE'RE LOSING PRESSURE FAST. I'VE GIVEN THE ORDER TO ABANDON SHIP.
THE INTEGRAL SUIT JET ISN'T STRONG ENOUGH TO ESCAPE THE ODELOTS DRAGNET-BEAM! WE'RE BEING PULLED INTO THE HOLD OF THE FLOTILLA FLAGSHIP!


THEY WERE TAKEN BEFORE A HIGH-RANKING ODELOT INTELLIGENCE OFFICER—
. . . SO WE CAME TO CHECK ON THE WELL-BEING OF EARTH'S PEACE TREATY DELEGATION.
YOU WILL JOIN THEM IN CAPTIVITY. THEY ARE WAITING FOR THE LORD PANGREV TO RETURN AND PRONOUNCE THEIR DEATH SENTENCE.
THE EARTHMEN WERE TAKEN TO THE PALACE OF LORD PANGREV TO AWAIT HIS RETURN AND THE INEVITABLE EXECUTIONS HE WOULD ORDER.
BEHOLD THE ISLAND HOME OF LORD PANGREV, EARTHLINGS. VERY FEW ARE PRIVILEGED TO SET FOOT THERE, EVEN FEWER LIVE TO TELL OF THE EXPERIENCE.

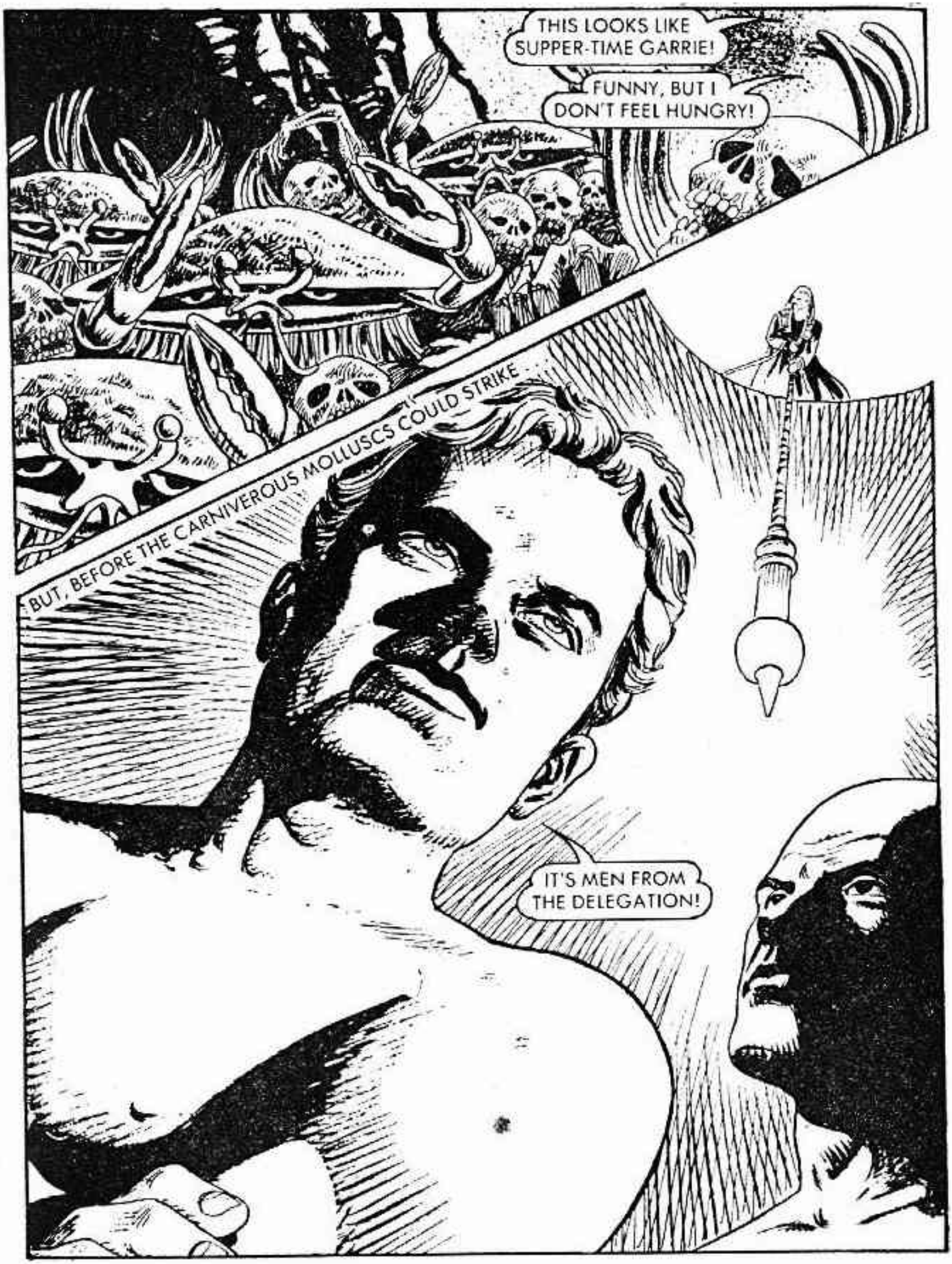
HI THERE, WE'RE THE RESCUE PARTY . . .
. . . BUT WE DIDN'T QUITE GET THINGS RIGHT!

WE HEARD RUMOURS OF A SECRET ODELOT FORCE WHICH HAD ESCAPED THE TREATY FLEET LIMITATIONS, BUT, BEFORE WE COULD FIND OUT MORE, THEY LOCKED US IN HERE.
SO WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY ARE PLANNING TO DO.


LATER, THE MONOTONY OF IMPRISONMENT WAS SUDDENLY BROKEN . . .
HEY, COME AND LOOK AT THIS!
IT'S THE BASE SHIP! PANGREV MUST HAVE REPAIRED HER.
IT'S SICKENING TO SEE GOOD FIGHTING EQUIPMENT IN THE HANDS OF THOSE ODELOTIAN SCUM!

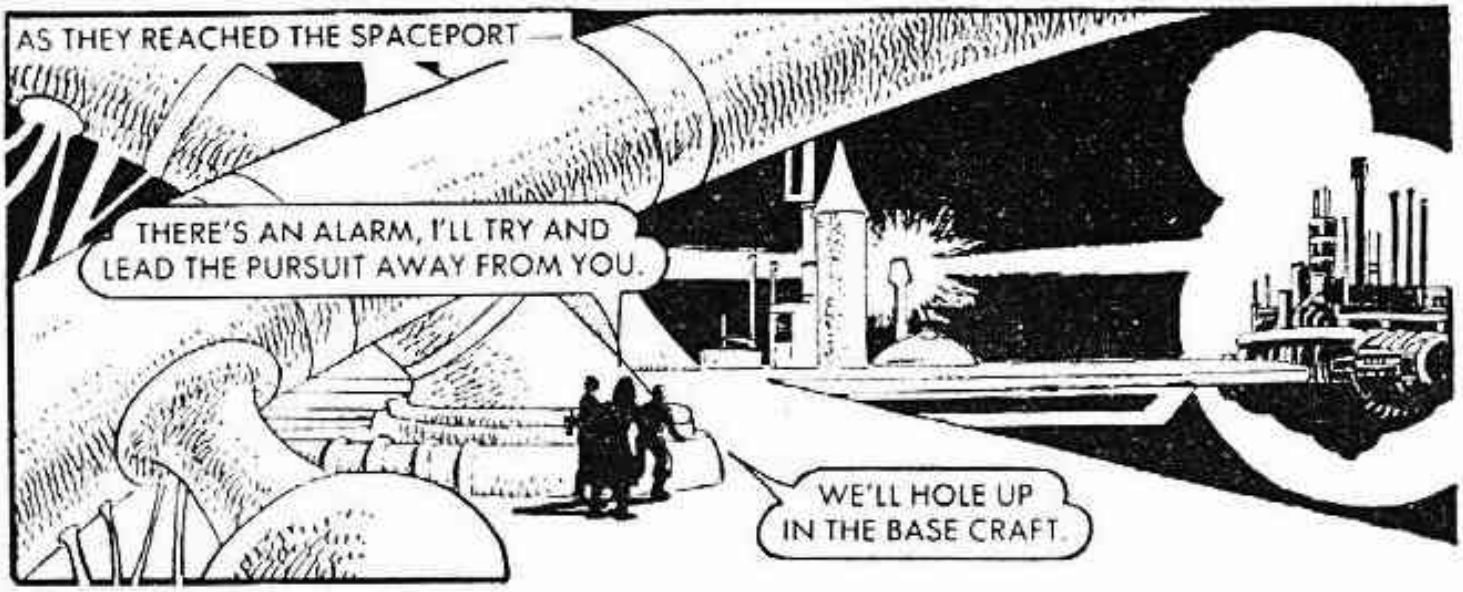

LORD PANGREV WAS A DESPOT WHO DECIDED THE RULES FOR LAW AND JUSTICE ACCORDING TO HOW HE HAPPENED TO FEEL THAT DAY.
I HAVE DECIDED THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE EARTHLING PEACE TREATY DELEGATION MAY LIVE A WHILE LONGER . . .

. . . BUT THE REST OF THE EARTHLINGS ARE PIRATES AND WILL DIE A CRIMINAL'S DEATH. TAKE THEM TO THE SLAUGHTER HOLE!
AS LEADERS OF THE EXPEDITION, GARRIE AND SHARGAL WERE SELECTED TO BE PANGREV'S FIRST VICTIMS.
WHEN THE DAYLIGHT FADES, SHELL-BACKED ROCK CRAWLERS WILL FEED ON YOUR FLESH. YOU HAVE UNTIL NIGHT TO THINK ABOUT THE FUTILITY OF CHALLENGING THE POWER OF LORD PANGREV.
AT NIGHTFALL—
IT'S HOPELESS SHARGAL, HIS LORDSHIP'S PET FLESH-EATERS HAVE SHELLS LIKE FERRO-PLASTIC!


THIS LOOKS LIKE SUPPER-TIME GARRIE!
FUNNY, BUT I DON'T FEEL HUNGRY!
BUT, BEFORE THE CARNIVEROUS MOLLUSCS COULD STRIKE...
IT'S MEN FROM THE DELEGATION!

STRANDS OF TWISTED ENERGY FORMED A ROPE TO PULL THEM OUT—
WE'VE BEEN IN PANGREV'S JAILS LONGER THAN YOU. AND THAT'S LONG ENOUGH TO WORK OUT AN ESCAPE PLAN.
WE CAPTURED A STOCK OF ANTI-GRAVITY BELTS FROM THE PALACE MAINTENANCE CREW.
THAT HELL HOLE WILL DISPOSE OF OUR PRISONER.
HIS BONES SHOULD FOOL PANGREV INTO THINKING HE'S SEEN THE LAST OF US.

THEY ESCAPED THROUGH A VENTILATION SHAFT—
NOW WE HAVE TO HIDE!

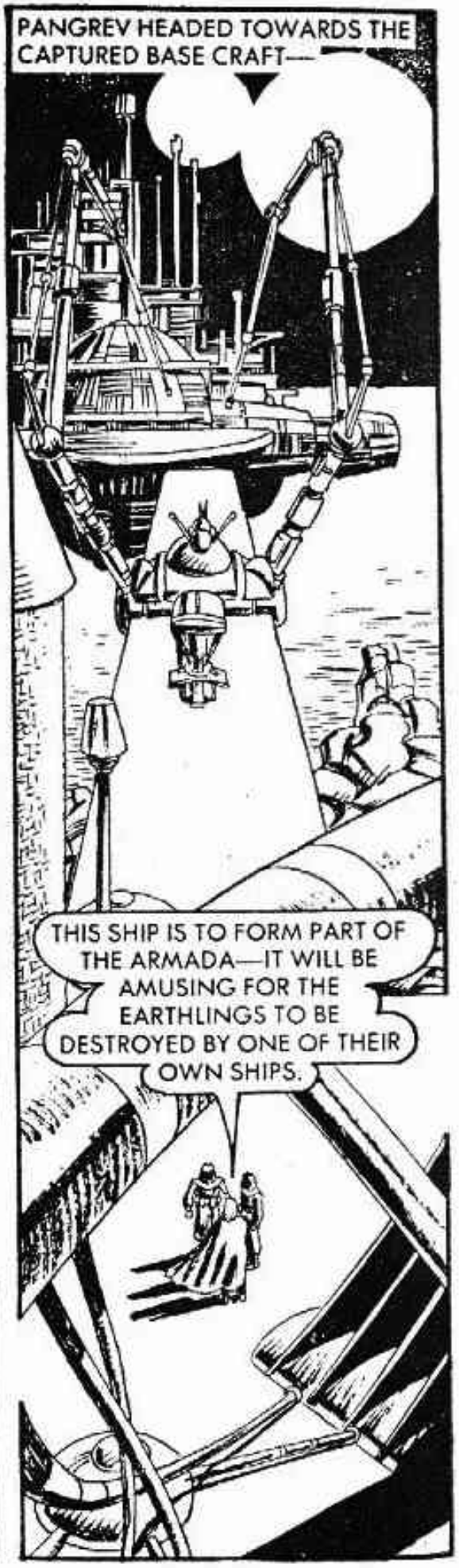

AS THEY REACHED THE SPACEPORT—
THERE'S AN ALARM, I'LL TRY AND LEAD THE PURSUIT AWAY FROM YOU.
WE'LL HOLE UP IN THE BASE CRAFT.

I KNOW PLACES ON THIS SHIP WHICH EVEN A SNIFFER PROBE COULDN'T DETECT.

WE LAID A FALSE TRAIL TOWARDS THE SEA TO FOOL PANGREV.
GOOD MAN!

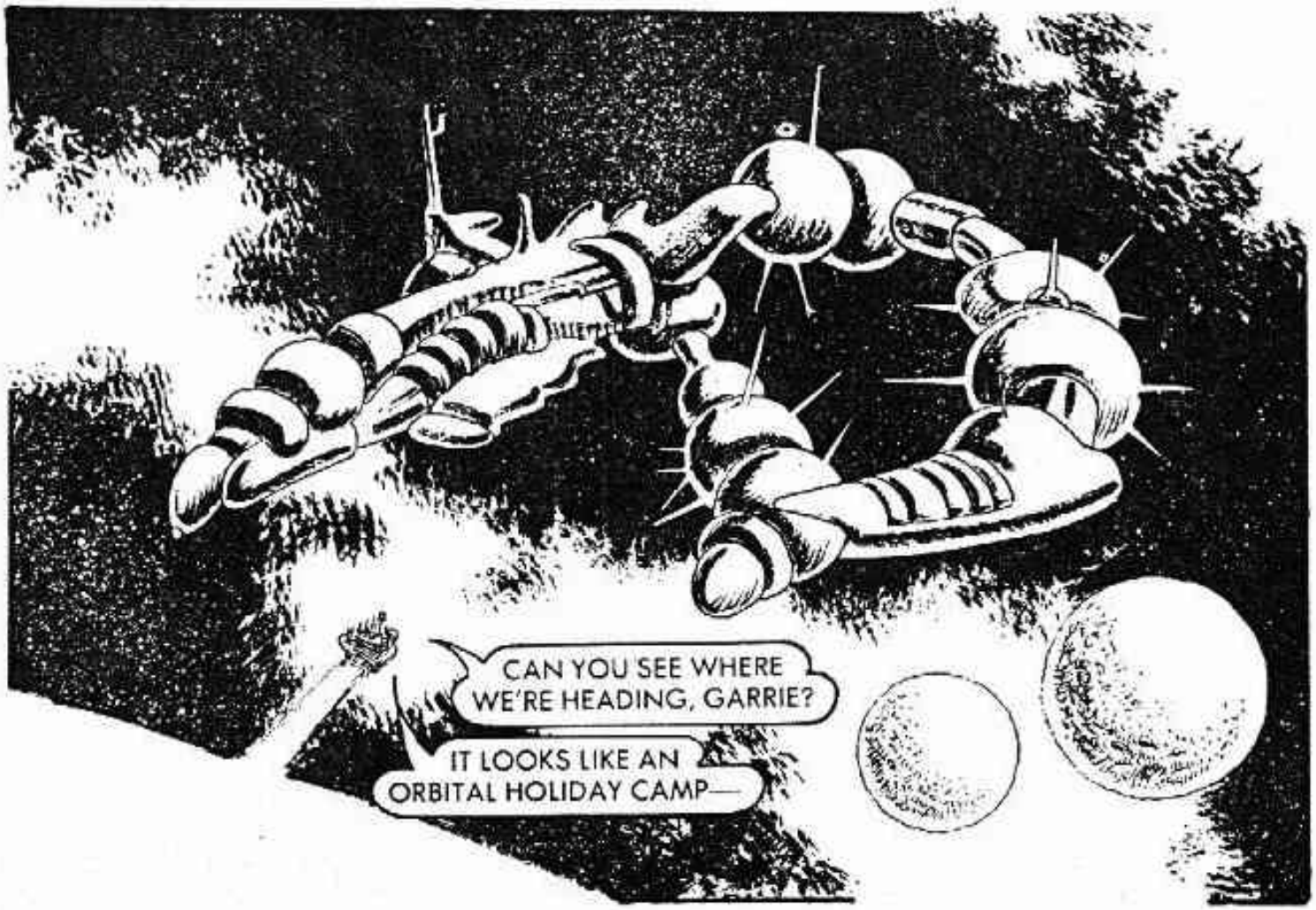
THE MEN OF THE DELEGATION ARE OUT THERE ALSO CONFUSING THE PURSUIT.
SHARGAL KNEW EVERY INCH OF THE BASE CRAFT AND GOT RATIONS AND KIT FOR THE FUGITIVES WITHUT AROUSING THE ODELOTIAN CREW'S SUSPICIONS.
WHEN DAYLIGHT RETURNED TO THE ISLAND, THE CAPTAIN OF THE PALACE GUARD REPORTED TO THE LORD PANGREV.'
WE HAVE RECAPTURED ALL THE TERRAN DELEGATES, BUT THE PIRATES CHOSE TO DROWN IN THE SEA RATHER THAN FACE EXECUTION.
CARRY OUT YOUR OWN INVESTIGATION INTO HOW IT HAPPENED CAPTAIN, I HAVE OTHER, MORE WEIGHTY MATTERS TO ATTEND TO.

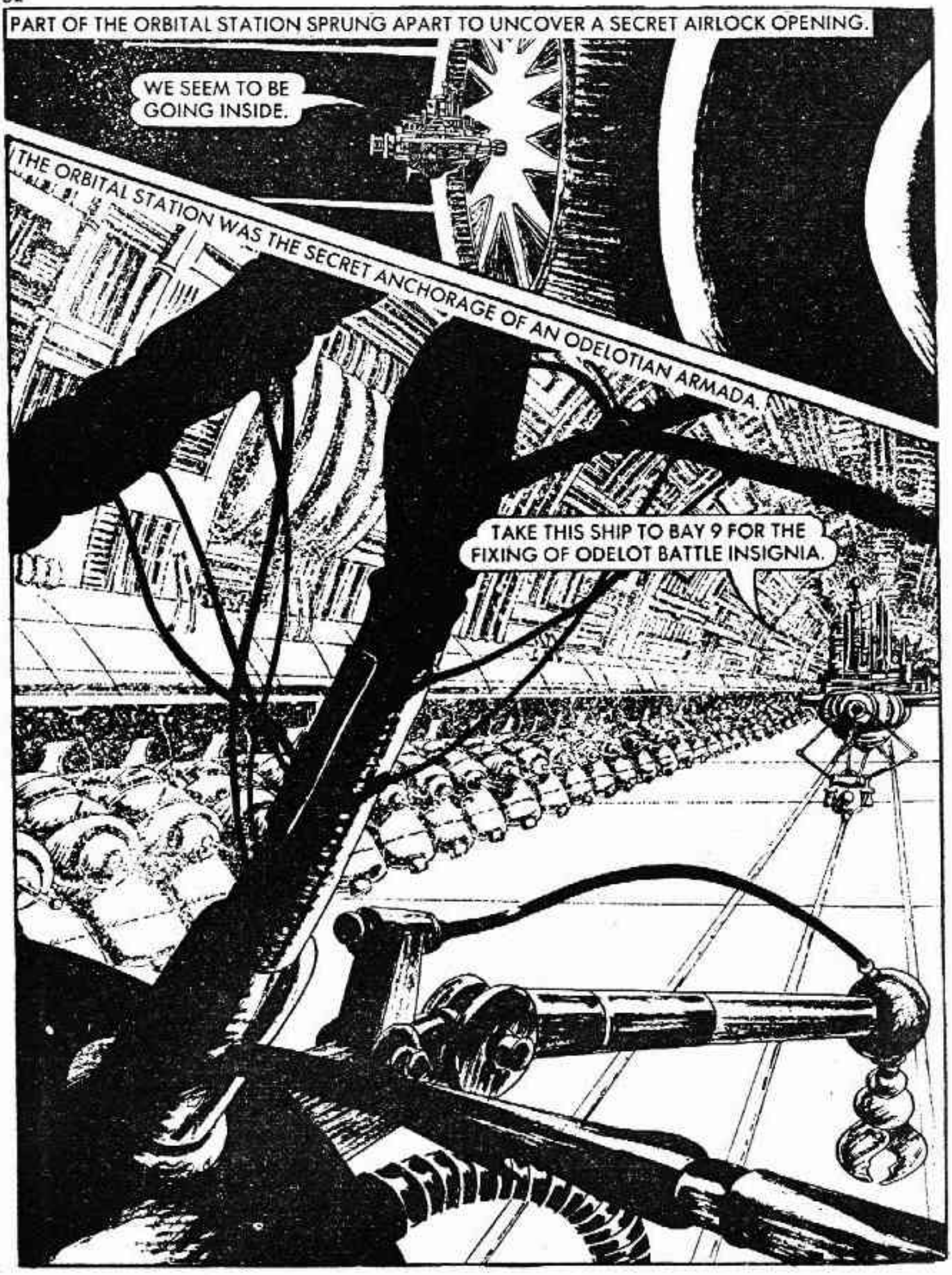
A FEW EARTHLINGS ARE OF NO CONSEQUENCE WHEN I AM PREPARING TO CAPTURE THEIR ENTIRE PLNET WITH MY NEW ARMADA.


PANGREV HEADED TOWARDS THE CAPTURED BASE CRAFT—
THIS SHIP IS TO FORM PART OF THE ARMADA—IT WILL BE AMUSING FOR THE EARTHLINGS TO BE DESTROYED BY ONE OF THEIR OWN SHIPS.

PANGREV'S ARRIVAL DID NOT ESCAPE THE ATTENTION OF THE HIDDEN EARTHMEN.
WHAT'S THIS ARMADA HE'S TALKING ABOUT?
I DON'T KNOW! BY THE SOUND OF THINGS WE'LL SOON BE TAKING OFF.

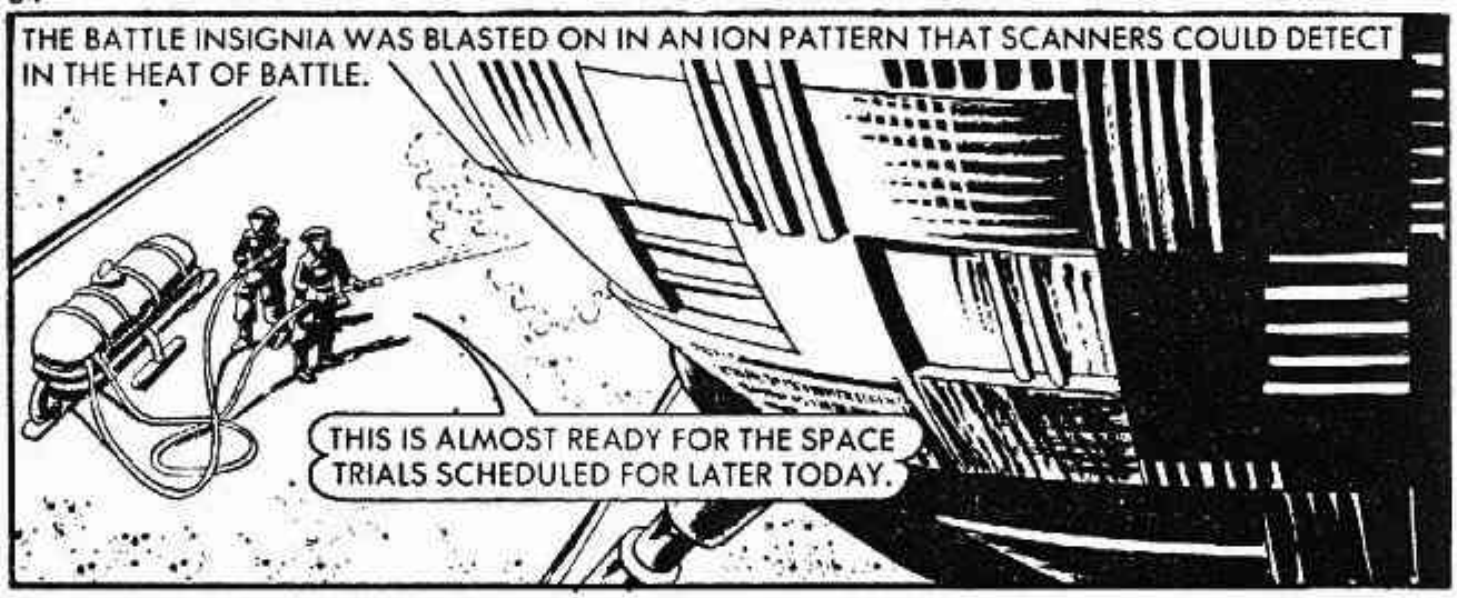
ANYWAY, WE'LL SOON FIND OUT.


CAN YOU SEE WHERE WE'RE HEADING, GARRIE?
IT LOOKS LIKE AN ORBITAL HOLIDAY CAMP—


PART OF THE ORBITAL STATION SPRUNG APART TO UNCOVER A SECRET AIRLOCK OPENING.
WE SEEM TO BE GOING INSIDE.
THE ORBITAL STATION WAS THE SECRET ANCHORAGE OF AN ODELOTIAN ARMADA.
TAKE THIS SHIP TO BAY 9 FOR THE FIXING OF ODELOT BATTLE INSIGNIA.

IF THESE BATTLECRAFT REACH EARTH THEY'LL OUTGUN OUR DEFENCE CRUISERS A HUNDRED TIMES OVER.

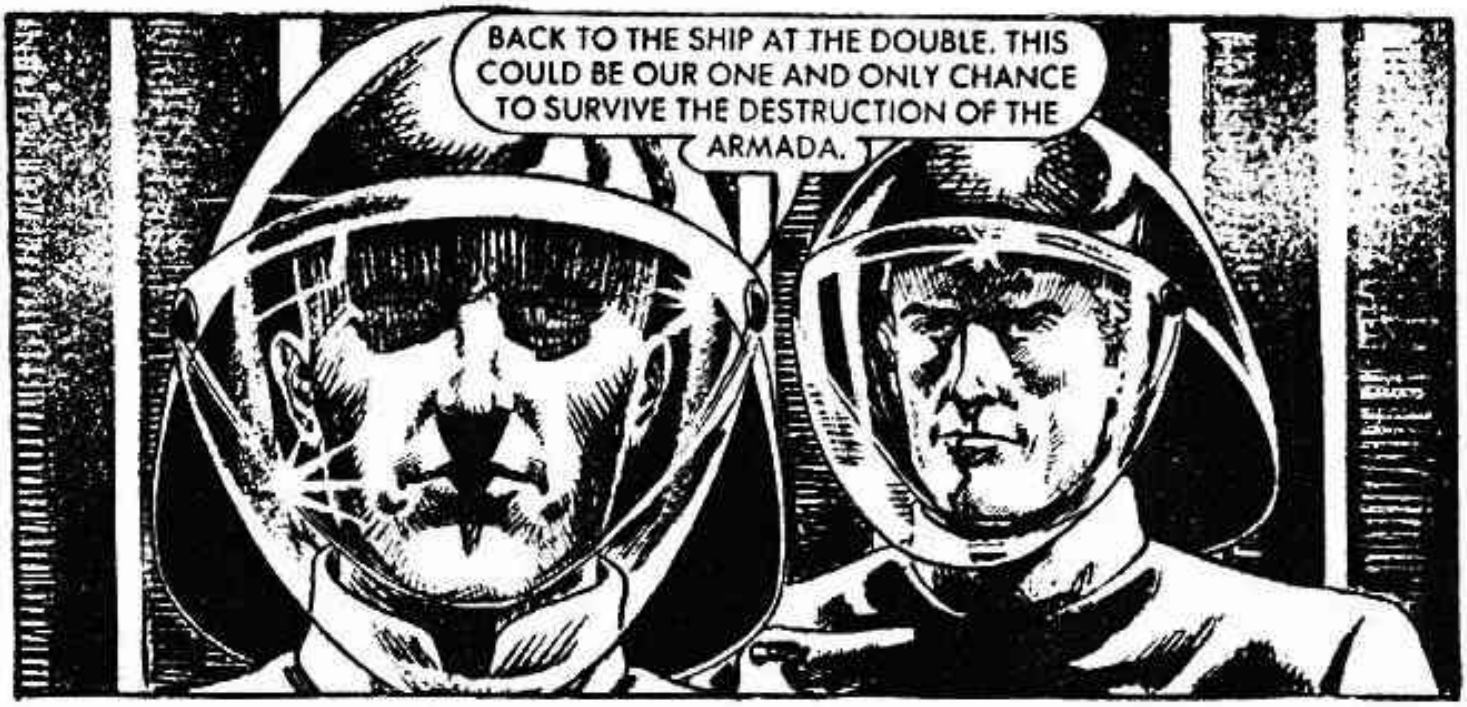
WE'VE GOT TO STOP THIS ARMADA SETTING OUT.
IF WE FAIL THERE'S NOBODY ELSE BACKING US UP.

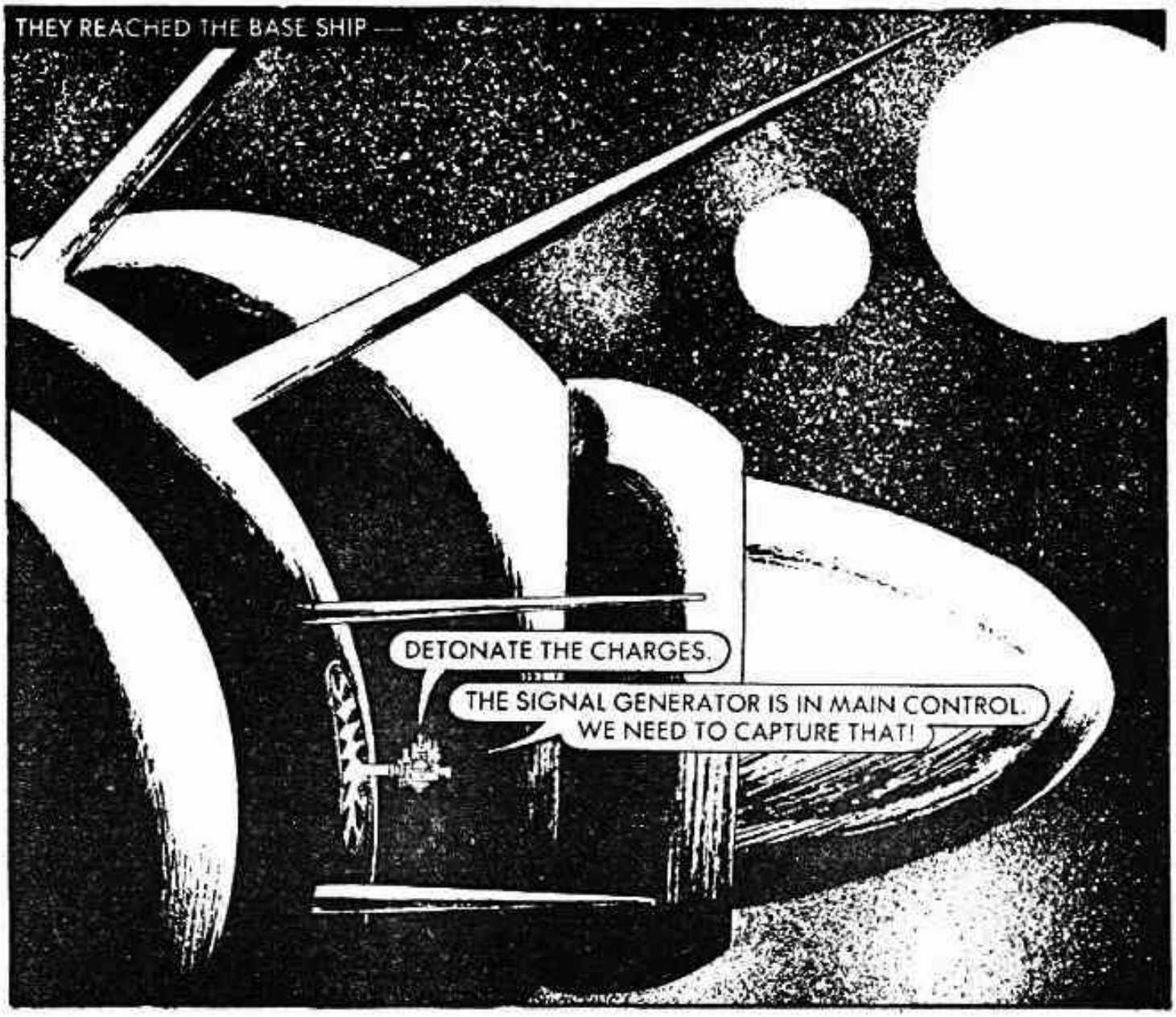

THE BATTLE INSIGNIA WAS BLASTED ON IN AN ION PATTERN THAT SCANNERS COULD DETECT IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE.
THIS IS ALMOST READY FOR THE SPACE TRIALS SCHEDULED FOR LATER TODAY.

SILENTLY, THE TWO TERRANS STRUCK —
LEAVE THE BODIES FOR THE OTHERS TO HIDE. WE NEED TO CONCENTRATE ON SABOTAGING THE ARMADA.

THE FEVERISH LAST MINUTE PREPARATION WORK ON THE SHIPS OF THE ARMADA ENABLED GARRIE AND SHARGAL TO MOVE UNCHALLENGED THROUGH THE SECRET ANCHORAGE.
THERE'S A TANK OF LIQUID OXYGEN OVER THERE.
CHECK, I'VE SEEN IT.
THE EARTHMEN PLANTED SMALL CHARGES OF PLASTIC EXPLOSIVES ON THE CASING OF SUB-ATOMIC WARHEADS OF ANYTHING THAT WOULD CAUSE A SECONDARY EXPLOSION WHEN THE CHARGES WERE BLOWN.
I HOPE WE'RE WELL AWAY FROM HERE WHEN THE DETONATORS ARE ACTIVATED.

LOOK OUT — IT'S PANGREV! IF ANYONE'S LIKELY TO RECOGNISE US, HE IS!
THE CREW OF THE TERRAN SHIP REQUIRED FURTHER SPACE TRIALS TO FAMILIARISE THEMSELVES WITH EARTHLING EQUIPMENT.
TELL THEM I SHALL WATCH THEIR PERFORMANCE FROM MY FLAGSHIP.

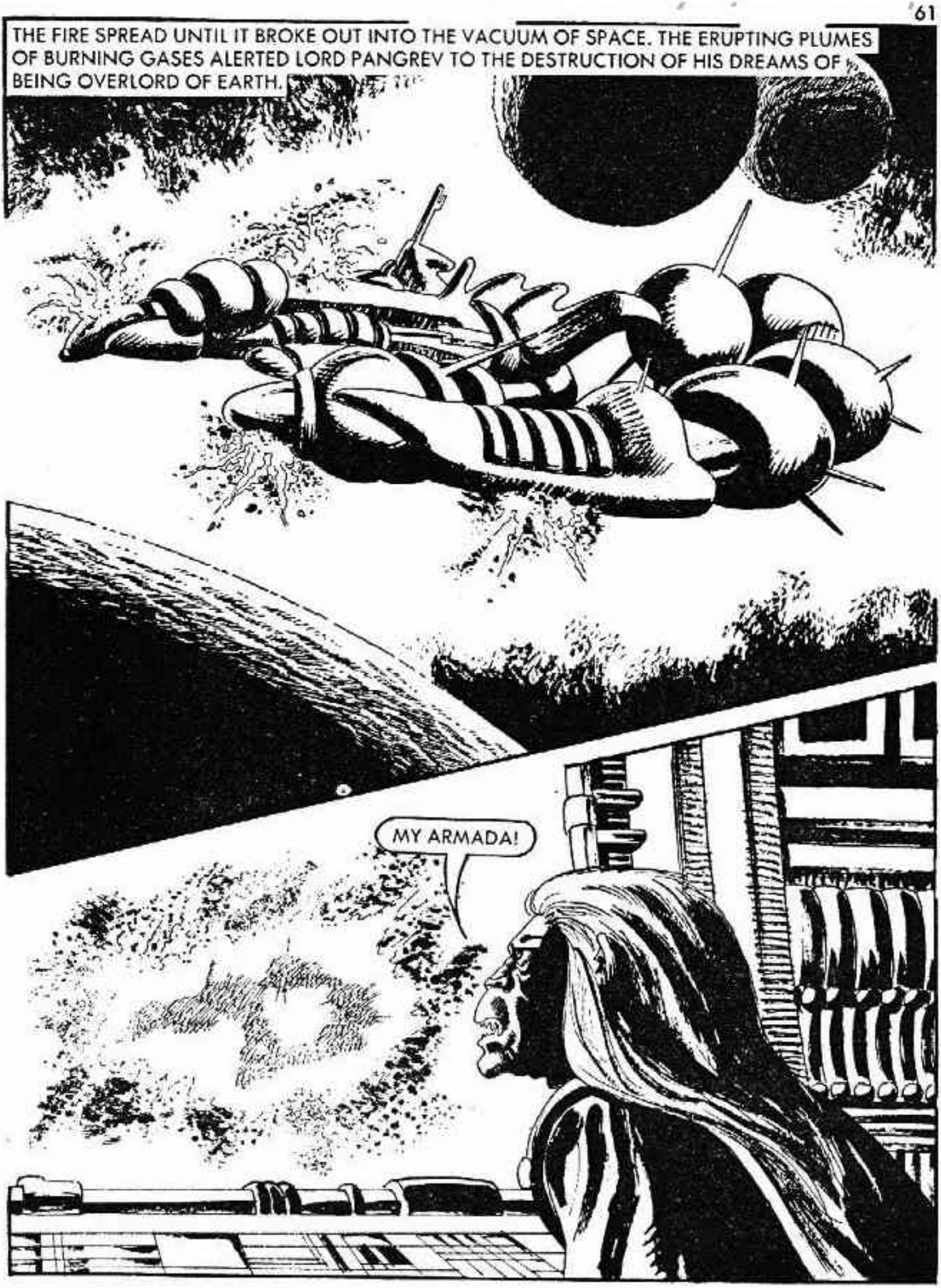

BACK TO THE SHIP AT THE DOUBLE. THIS COULD BE OUR ONE AND ONLY CHANCE TO SURVIVE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ARMADA.


THEY REACHED THE BASE SHIP —
DETONATE THE CHARGES.
THE SIGNAL GENERATOR IS IN MAIN CONTROL. WE NEED TO CAPTURE THAT!

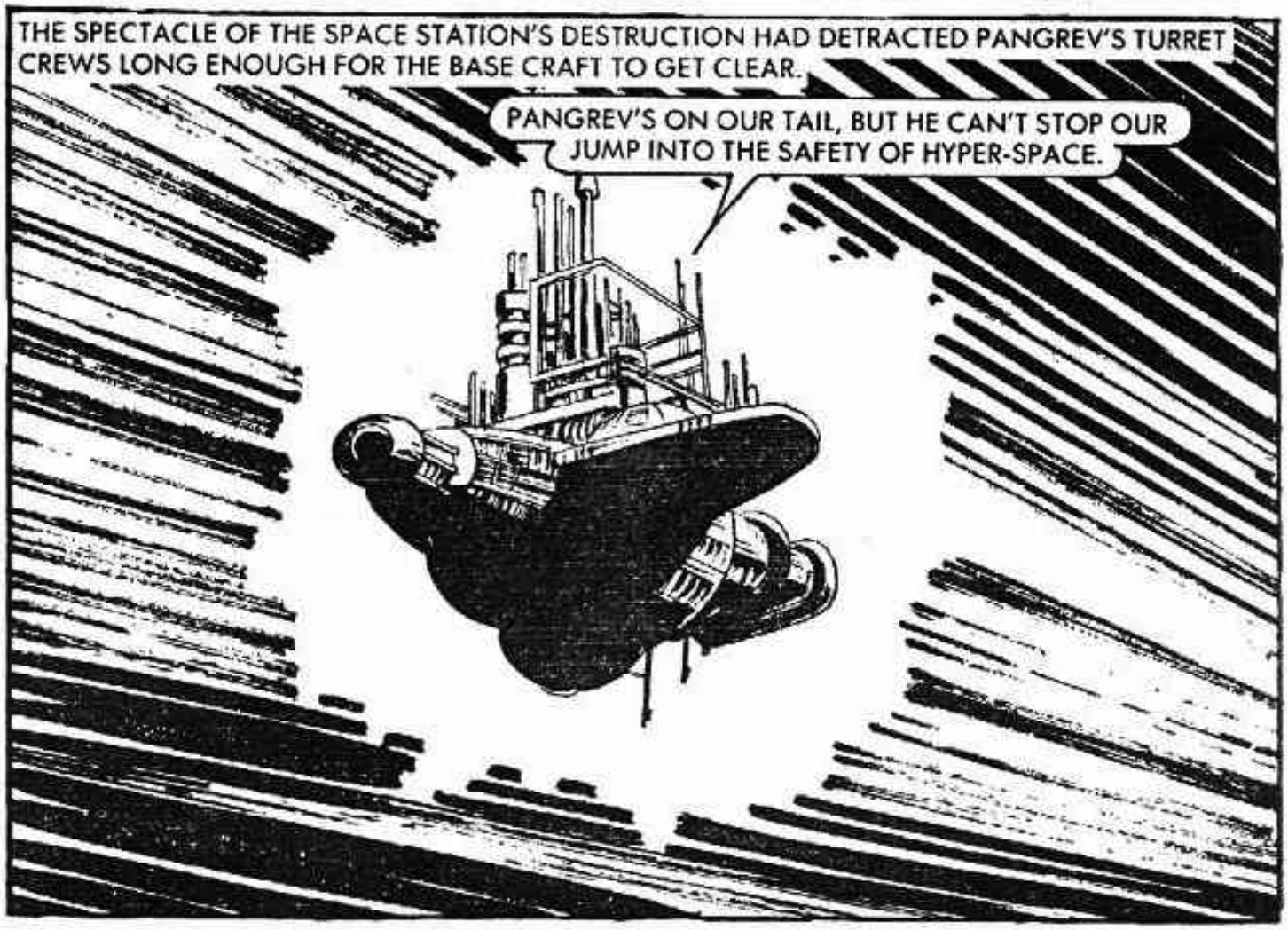
ON BOARD PANGREV'S SHIP —
THE CREW APPEAR COMPETENT, MY LORD.
WAIT, SOMETHING'S WRONG. GET A HIGH RESOLUTION SCAN OF HER FORWARD VIEW PORT!
TERRANS! THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE! WE CHECKED THAT SHIP WITH SNIFFER PROBES AFTER THE PRISON BREAK OUT!

THE SHIP'S OURS, SHARGAL.
THEY'VE ALTERED OUR EQUIPMENT LAYOUT. I CAN'T FIND THE DETONATOR SIGNAL GENERATOR.
PLEASE OBLIGE ME WITH EVASIVE ACTION EARTHLINGS. MY TURRET CREWS WOULD WELCOME SOME TARGET PRACTICE!
GREETINGS EARTHLINGS, YOU LEAD CHARMED LIVES . . . UNTIL NOW . . .
HURRY UP AND FIND THE BUTTON, SHARGAL. HIS LORDSHIP HAS TUMBLED US.

I'VE FOUND IT AT LAST!
THE CHARGES BLEW TO START THE CHAIN REACTION OF DESTRUCTION.
TAKE COVER!
WHERE? THE WHOLE HANGAR IS ABLAZE!


THE FIRE SPREAD UNTIL IT BROKE OUT INTO THE VACUUM OF SPACE. THE ERUPTING PLUMES OF BURNING GASES ALERTED LORD PANGREV TO THE DESTRUCTION OF HIS DREAMS OF BEING OVERLORD OF EARTH.
MY ARMADA!

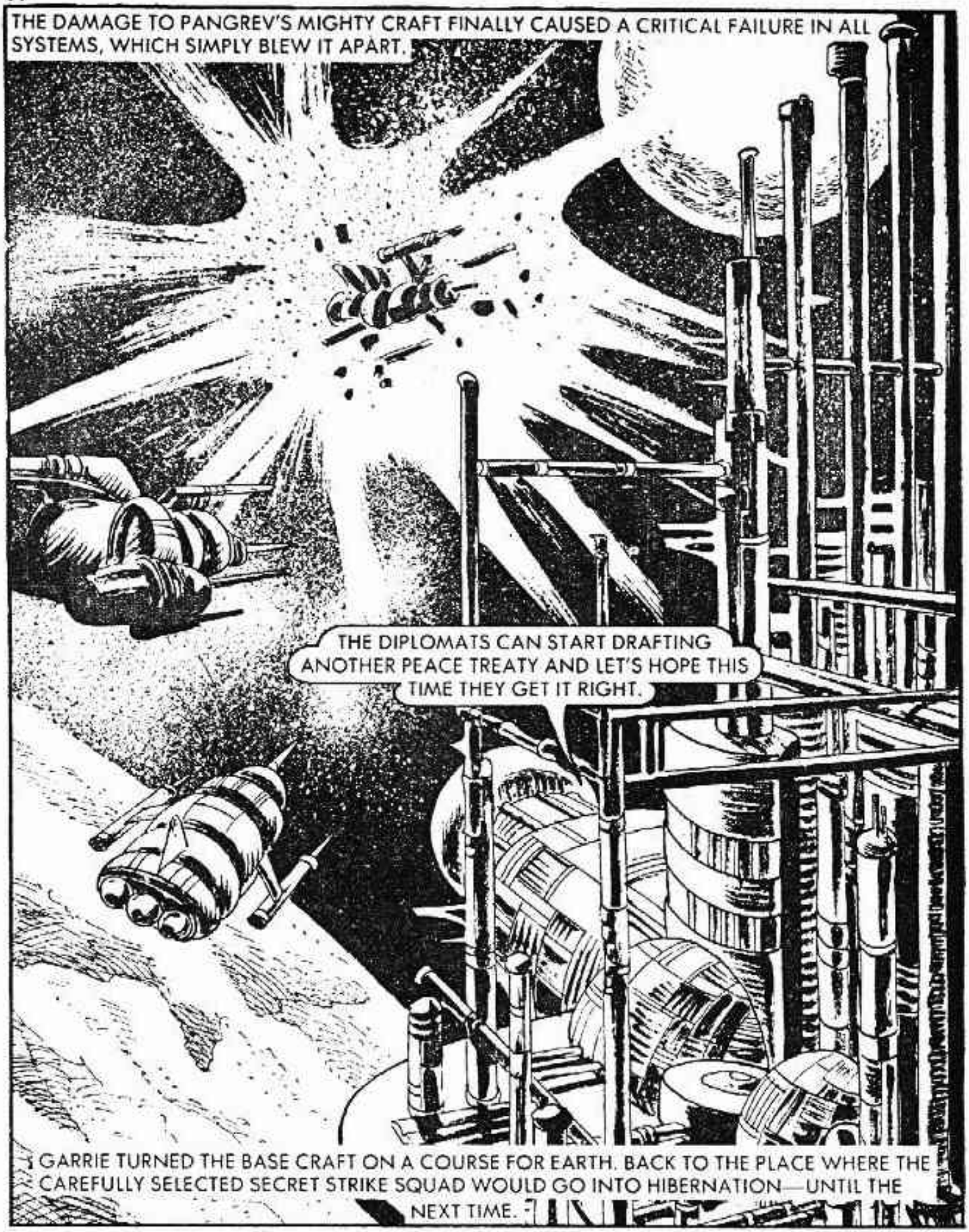
THE SHOCK OF SEEING HIS AMBITIONS OBLITERATED BROUGHT MADNESS TO THE LORD OF THE ODELOTIANS.
I WILL DESTROY THE EARTHLINGS WHO HAVE DONE THIS TO ME. I WILL PURSUE THEM TO THE ENDS OF THE KNOWN UNIVERSE, AND BEYOND, AND INFLICT A TORMENT AT LEAST EQUAL TO THE ONE I FEEL AT THIS MOMENT!


THE SPECTACLE OF THE SPACE STATION'S DESTRUCTION HAD DETRACTED PANGREV'S TURRET CREWS LONG ENOUGH FOR THE BASE CRAFT TO GET CLEAR.
PANGREV'S ON OUR TAIL, BUT HE CAN'T STOP OUR JUMP INTO THE SAFETY OF HYPER-SPACE.

PANGREV LEFT THE HYPER-TRANSMIT-RELAY STATION OPERATIONAL, WHICH MEANS I CAN GET A WARNING MESSAGE THROUGH.
GIVE THEM ENOUGH DETAILS TO JUSTIFY OUR TECHNICAL BREACH OF THE PEACE TREATY.
AT EACH STAGE ON THE HYPER-SPACE ROUTE FROM ODELOT TO EARTH, THE BASE CRAFT MANAGED TO STAY ONE JUMP AHEAD OF THE PURSUING PANGREV.
JOURNEY'S END, BUT THIS TIME THE RECEPTION COMMITTEE ARE FRIENDLY.

EVEN A SQUADRON OF CRUISERS IS NO MATCH FOR HIS BATTLESHIP, IF PANGREV PUTS UP A FIGHT!
ON BOARD PANGREV'S SHIP —
MY LORD . . . MIGHT I RECOMMEND ENGAGING THE ENEMY AT LONG RANGE TO GET MAXIMUM ADVANTAGE FROM OUR MORE POWERFUL WEAPONRY.
YOU MAY! BUT I SHALL IGNORE IT! YOUR ORDERS ARE TO DIRECT FIRE POWER SOLELY AGAINST ONE CRAFT. OBEY THOSE ORDERS!
PANGREV'S FOLLOWING US. LEAD HIM ON TO WHERE OUR CRUISERS CAN FOCUS MAXIMUM FIRE POWER.

FIRE WAS EXCHANGED —
HAVE WE DESTROYED THE PIRATES? I CAN'T TELL, THE SCREENS HAVE GONE BLANK!
HAVE THE EARTHLINGS SURRENDERED? HAVE THEY BEEN DESTROYED? WHY DOES NOBODY ANSWER ME?
PANGREV'S BLIND HATE HAD NOT FORESEEN THAT
TOTAL FIREPOWER WEAKENED DEFENCE SCREENS. SLOWLY HIS SHIP OVERHEATED —



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